Sharaa: Japan welcome in Golan role

TOKYO (R) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa reiterated on Saturday that he would welcome Japan's participation in a U.N. peacekeeping mission on the Golan Heights. "We hope that the two Japanese fact-finding missions will make a favourable decision on the matter," a Japanese Foreign Ministry official quoted Mr. Sharaa as telling Foreign Ministry Yohei Kono. Following the recent return of two fact-finding missions to the Middle East, Japan is expected to announce this month its decision to send troops to join a U.N. peacekeeping force policing the Golan Heights. Mr. Sharaa added that, if Japan decided to send peacekeepers, Syria would receive them with respect. He had made a similar comment when he met members of a Japanese mission in Syria. Mr. Sharaa arrived in Japan on Saturday on a two-day visit. He stopped over in Tokyo on his way to Indonesia after attending a conference in New York to review the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT.) He is due to attend a meeting of non-aligned countries in Indonesia. The Japanese contingent to Golan Heights is likely to replace a Canadian team in November

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر باللغة الانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية ،الرأي،

Happy Easter

The Jordan Times will not appear on Monday, April 24, due to the Easter holiday on Sunday, April 23. The next issue of the Jordan Times will be published on Tuesday, April 25. The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish readers and advertisers a very happy Easter.

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Israeli soldiers shoot Palestinian

RAMALLAH, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers shot and wounded a Palestinian driver who failed to stop at a roadblock in the occupied West Bank, military sources said Saturday. The soldiers said they fired warning shots after the driver had tried to run them over late Friday near the village of Naaleen, in the northwest of the West Bank. The Palestinian from the nearby village of Ras Karkar was taken to hospital in the town of Ramallah. In Nablus, several dozen Palestinians were arrested for throwing stones at soldiers, army officials said. An Israeli border policeman was slightly injured when he fell while running after the suspected stone-throwers, the army said.

Hizbollah attacks pro-Israeli militia

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Hizbollah guerrillas exploded a charge near a patrol of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia on Saturday without causing casualties, security officials said. The militia's radio said a charge exploded near Taybeh in an Israeli-occupied border zone in South Lebanon and that there were no injuries. Hizbollah said in a statement in Beirut that it had "killed or wounded all the members of the patrol" in the remote-controlled explosion. Ten SLA militiamen have been killed and 16 wounded since the beginning of the year in attacks spearheaded by the fundamentalist group.

Morocco expels five Iranians

RABAT (R) — Morocco has expelled five Iranians who are seeking political asylum in Canada after holding them for a week in a Casablanca detention centre, a lawyer said on Saturday. Abdul Latif Wahbi, lawyer and member of the independent Moroccan Human Rights Association (AMDH), told Reuters the five, including a woman and aged between 17 and 30 were arrested at Casablanca airport last weekend for alleged possession of false Spanish passports. They were trying to make their way to Canada where they were hoping to be granted political asylum, Mr. Wahbi said.

Gunmen kill two in Minya

ASSIUT (AP) — Gunmen killed a policeman and a civilian in two attacks in the militant stronghold of Minya province, but police said Saturday the attacks were not carried out by extremists. Both shootings took place Friday. In the first, gunmen opened fire on policeman Mohammad Abul Hamid Ali, 40, who was off duty and heading towards his farm near the village of Mantout, 240 kilometres south of Cairo. The gunmen fled, and police first believed they were militants. But on Saturday police released a statement saying the victim's mother and wife accused two men involved in a dispute with Ali. In the second slaying, two assailants shot dead Mustafa Atta Abdul Mutilib, 35, in Mallawi, 260 kilometres south of Cairo. Police also described the attack as resulting from a personal dispute, but local sources said militants had accused Abdul Mutilib of collaborating with police.

Inquiry clears S. African activist

PRETORIA (AP) — A government inquiry released Saturday cleared prominent anti-apartheid activist Allan Boesak of allegations that he stole foreign donor money. The accusations created a scandal earlier this year that forced Mr. Boesak to give up his appointment as South Africa's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

Rescue continues at Oklahoma blast site; 1 held, 2 questioned

OKLAHOMA CITY (Agencies) — With one suspect in jail and two witnesses being questioned in other states, officials said Saturday a second suspect was still at large in the deadly bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma.

Timothy McVeigh, 26, was held in jail after being charged in court late Friday with the bombing.

The toll from Wednesday's attack stood at 7 dead Saturday morning. Wind, rain and a brief storm of pea-sized hail hampered workers and slowed the search late Friday. About 150 people were missing, and about 200 others were injured in the blast.

Rescuers expected the toll to rise still more Saturday as they reached the portion of the ruined building that held a day care center and large government office.

Authorities said McVeigh, an ex-soldier, was enraged at the government for its siege of a religious cult in Waco, Texas, in 1993, that ended in flames and death (see separate story).

A second man, Terry Nichols, 40, was being held in Kansas, where he lives, and Nichols' brother, James, was held overnight in Michigan. Both are considered material witnesses, Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern said in Washington.

"These are very encouraging and positive steps, but there is much work to be done," said Weldon Kennedy, Federal Bureau or Investigations (FBI) agent in charge of the investigation. He said the search was under way at other locations around the country but would not elaborate.

In Oklahoma City, a small cinder-block building that had been weakened by Wednesday's blast at the federal building 21/2 blocks away collapsed Saturday morning. No one was injured.

Many spaces in the rubble have been spray-painted "DB" to identify where the bodies are.

"We see, we know where bodies are in the void but we can't get to them because of the rubble," said assistant fire chief Jon Hansen Hansen.

House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich, one of the most powerful politicians in Washington, spent more than an hour touring the bomb site early Saturday.

The explosion was caused by thousands of kilos of fuel-and-fertilizer explosives packed into a Ryder rental truck.

After a 15-minute appearance before the magistrate he called "Sir," McVeigh was taken to the El Reno federal correctional centre 50 kilometres away pending court hearings next Thursday.

Nichols, wearing blue Jeans and accompanied by his wife and daughter, drove his blue pickup into the police parking lot and walked inside to surrender, saying he had heard his name on television, the Wichita Eagle reported today.

After early suspicions that the Alfred P. Murrah federal building was targeted by international terrorists. Friday's developments pointed strongly to homegrown violence from the extremist anti-government movement.

President Bill Clinton, declaring Sunday a national day of mourning, said he and his wife, Hillary, would visit Oklahoma City then for a memorial service.

Lightning and wind-whipped rain forced rescuers at the bombed-out building to temporarily halt their search for bodies or survivours of the attack.

Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating said: "This weather doesn't help us at all, we need to get the weather through and get this building shored up."

Officials were concerned that the strong winds could dislodge chunks from the tonnes of twisted steel and cement that have been dangling from the gaping hole in the north facade of the building.

Assistant fire chief Hansen said they were having some structural problems with the building and water getting into the building.

"We're going to go to work in spite of the weather," Mr. Hansen said.

Search and rescue efforts have plodded along since the attack, with hundreds of firefighters, police personnel, and investigators pouring over the mounds of debris, searching by hand for survivours and bodies.

With the exception of rain on Wednesday night, the weather had remained clear and warm, allowing the search to continue unimpeded until late Friday and early Saturday.

Thunder showers rolled in from plains sending the temperature plunging. The winds and lighting forced a brief halt in rescue efforts around dawn with personnel scurrying for cover in waiting buses.

Showers and lighting were expected to continue intermittantly with winds reaching 32 to 40 kilometres per hour.

The temperature, which had been in mild, was not expected to go beyond the 13 degrees Celsius Saturday according to weather forecasts.

Emergency aid centres have called for donors to add thermal underwear and rain gear to the lists of items the public can give. Officials have also asked for the donation of a lotion that can be applied to sniffer dogs' paws to help toughen their skin up.

(Continued on page 7)

Blast suspect said driven by rage over Waco disaster

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — He was a clean-shaven and crew-cut former soldier. But authorities also said Timothy McVeigh burned with a rage that erupted into the worst bombing ever carried out on U.S. territory.

The 27-year-old, described as a good student by those who knew him in his hometown of Pendleton, New York, was accused Friday of bombing a federal building in Oklahoma City. At least 81 people, including 12 children, were killed in the blast.

Authorities described McVeigh as a fiery rightwinger who was angry at the government for the 1993 Waco, Texas cult disaster in which about 80 followers of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians died.

McVeigh was so "agitated" by the showdown between the Branch Davidians and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms that he visited the site of the tragedy, according to a co-worker quoted in Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) court documents.

"After visiting the site, Mc Veigh expressed extreme anger at the federal government and advised that the government never should have done that," the co-worker was quoted as saying.

The former soldier attended a meeting of the paramilitary Michigan Militia in January, according to a local television, and sought to convince the group to take action against the federal agents who stormed the Branch Davidian compound.

The Oklahoma bombing came precisely two years after a 51-day standoff between federal officers and armed cult members ended with the compound engulfed in a fire.

Tim McVeigh

In his high school year book, McVeigh had listed talking, computers and cars as being among his interests. He also played basketball.

Classmate Wendy Stephany described him as quiet and "friendly."

When she heard of his arrest, she commented: "What happened to him between then and now? It must have been a lot."

U.S. defence officials turned over Mc Veigh's military records, but his military career was a bit murky.

Major General Charles McClain said McVeigh served in the U.S. Army but was not an active member. But other reports suggested he was a munitions expert based at Fort Bill, Oklahoma.

John Maddox, district attorney of Noble County where McVeigh was first picked up for a traffic violation and weapons possession, described the suspect as nonchalant when he was arrested and afterward.

McVeigh, wearing an orange prison shirt, also was impassive as he was taken out of a courthouse in Perry, Oklahoma, and put on a helicopter for Oklahoma City where he heard the arrest warrant read to him.

He appeared to take little notice of the hundrerds of people who crowded in front of the courthouse, shouting "baby killer," "murderer," "bastard" and other insults.

McVeigh, according to an NBC television report, called himself the "mad bomber.... with my associates from the Michigan Militia" in an America On Line directory.

His personal quote was: "Let us take back the government ... or die trying. Boom," NBC said. McVeigh's address was listed as Decker, Michigan.

The FBI's arrest warrant for McVeigh accused him of "malicious danger and destroying by means of an explosive real property... possessed or used in the United States of America."

McVeigh was arrested less than two hours after Wednesday's bombing and held in Perry, about 100 kilometres north of Oklahoma, charged with driving without a license plate and carrying a weapon. He was carrying a semiautomatic pistol with armour-piercing bullets when he was pulled over by a highway patrolman.

(Continued on page 2)

King visits U.S. aircraft carrier, pays tribute to U.S.-Jordan ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Saturday visited the U.S. aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt which is anchored in the Red Sea.

Accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Mirai', the King was welcomed by the carrier's commander Admiral Charles Steve Abbot and senior crew members.

The King toured the ship and inspected the types of planes, weapons and other equipment aboard.

The King met the crew and talked about relations between Jordan and the United States.

Replying to a question about his daily routine as

(Continued on page 7)

His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday visits the U.S. aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt (Armed Forces photo)

Peres to attend Amman symposium

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres will lead his country's delegation to a three-day symposium opening in Amman on Monday on development projects in the Jordan Rift Valley, officials said Sunday.

It was expected that His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan would meet with Mr. Peres for separate talks on Jordanian-Israeli relations and also attend part of the symposium. But there was no immediate confirmation of the meetings.

It was also not immediately known how long Mr. Peres will stay in Amman, or whether he would only attend the first day of the symposium, which is seen as a key event in Jordanian-Israeli efforts to develop the Jordan Rift Valley that the two countries share.

Mr. Peres, who has visited Jordan several times to attend bilateral and multilateral negotiations of the Middle East peace process, has yet to pay an official visit to the Kingdom. Several dates were suggested in the past, but all plans were cancelled due to what officials described as last-minute snags.

The Israeli foreign minister last visited Jordan in March when he and Crown Prince Hassan discussed joint efforts to raise finances for projects included in the Jordan-Israel peace treaty signed in October.

Subsequently, the Crown Prince and Mr. Peres held talks with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and European Commission officials in Bonn and secured pledges of financing for feasibility studies for the projects and a promise that financing the projects themselves could also be studied at a later stage.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin visited Amman two weeks ago to attend a meeting of the Jordanian-Israeli-American trilateral economic working group which also focused on developing the Jordan Rift Valley.

The delegation accompanying Mr. Peres to this week's meeting will include nearly 60 Israeli officials and representatives of dozens of companies which seek a share in projects envisaged for the Jordan Rift Valley under a programme drawn up by Jordan, Israel and the United States.

"The focal point of the meeting will be singling out

(Continued on page 7)

PNA, militant groups close to breakthrough

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — The Palestinian self-rule authority is moving closer to Islamic opposition groups in reconciliation talks aimed at easing tension in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian officials said Saturday.

Sources in the Islamic Jihad Group said the faction was ready to consider a freeze in anti-Israeli attacks in the autonomous areas until July 1 to give the Palestinian Authority (PNA) a chance to expand its self-rule to the West Bank.

But the PNA should first drop its insistence that Islamic Jihad fighters surrender their arms and should free the group's estimated 50 prisoners, said one source.

It was the first time that Islamic Jihad had taken such a conciliatory stance.

In Amman, a spokesman for the Islamic Resistance movement, Hamas, said it was ready for full political dialogue with the PNA to stop the danger of a civil war in Gaza.

But spokesman Ibrahim Ghosheh said the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had to reciprocate by releasing detainees, stopping arrests of Hamas activists, and dismantling a military court set up to try Islamic militants.

"Hamas is ready to engage with the Palestinian authority in a broad political dialogue with an open agenda to lead to the path of confidence building," Ibrahim Ghosheh, a Hamas spokesman, told Reuters.

"We have felt the danger of the present situation ... the push towards a civil war, God forbid, made the movement and its leadership agree to conducting a comprehensive political dialogue," he added.

A spokesman for the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), a secular opposition faction, said in Gaza the group also will refrain from "actions that would increase tensions in Palestinian-ruled areas, including military operations against Israel."

Ahmad Hammad told the Associated Press the decision was taken after a meeting between DFLP leaders and Yasser Arafat late Friday, during which the Palestinian leader promised to release the group's 18 prisoners.

The group claimed responsibility for the Feb. 6 attack in which an Israeli security guard escorting an Israeli gasoline tanker driving in the Gaza Strip was shot and killed by militants.

A Palestinian source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said leaders of Hamas in Jordan, Syria and other Arab countries will hold a meeting in Cairo to decide on a unified stance regarding military action against Israel.

The Islamic Jihad source, a senior member of the group who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, said representatives from his organisation group made the proposal at a meeting with PNA officials last week.

He said the self-rule government has not yet responded.

"The ball is now in the court of the government," he said.

Mohammad Zuhdi Al Nashashibi, minister of finance, said after the weekly meeting of Mr. Arafat's self-rule cabinet that a breakthrough in the talks was not far off.

Dispute over voting haunts NPT talks

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The landmark international conference to determine the future of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ended its first week Friday with the outcome no clearer than when it started.

When it resumes Monday, delegates will have one eye on a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting half a world away in Bandung, Indonesia.

The ministers of the 112-country movement were to discuss NPT renewal, which delegates here hope will help remove the stumbling block on voting procedure.

The conference at U.N. headquarters in New York opened in discord Monday after delegates failed, following days of negotiations, to decide on a public or secret vote.

The voting issue, which had been expected to be resolved ahead of opening day, continues to dog the conference. Both sides are lobbying intently and many countries remain undecided.

The debate over whether to vote publicly, as is customary at the United Nations, or cast secret ballots, serves as a bellwether on the power issue between the West and developing countries, the nuclear-haves and have-nots.

The United States, leading the drive to make the 25-year 1970 treaty permanent, expressed confidence it would win the required 90-vote majority by the time the conference ends May 12.

Some non-aligned countries are rankled by the West's aggressive persuasion. They say a secret vote would shield them from some of that pressure and protect them, in case they oppose indefinite extension, from possible political and economic reprisals.

U.S. Vice President Al Gore on Tuesday attacked the notion of a secret ballot, calling on participants to bear responsibility for renewal of the NPT by taking decisions that must "stand the light of day."

The conference president, Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States Jayantha Dhanapala, was to begin consultations with delegates Monday in an attempt to find a consensus. His shepherding report was due Wednesday.

Mr. Dhanapala's effort will coincide with the three-day NAM financial ministers meeting Monday in Indonesia, which currently chairs the movement. The meeting will be closely watched for signs of the direction non-aligned NPT delegates will take here.

The West expects the Bandung conferees to issue a common appeal for total nuc-

(Continued on page 7)

Holy fire and riots in Jerusalem on Easter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Masses of pilgrims clutching flaming bundles of candles surged toward Christ's tomb Saturday marking the Orthodox Christian Easter celebration of the holy fire.

Scuffles broke out between dozens of local youths participating in the procession as they entered the compound of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected.

Two Israeli border guards and three Palestinian youths were injured in clashes on the square in front of the church.

Violence broke out when guards forced back dozens of Syrian Orthodox youths who had burst on to the square packed with worshippers, police said.

One of the guards was taken to hospital after he was crushed against wire netting.

Thousands of Egyptian Coptic Christians took part in the Orthodox Easter ceremony at the Holy Sepulchre for the first time since 1967.

The ceremony, celebrated in the same way for 11 centuries, is marked by the appearance of "sacred fire"

(Continued on page 7)

هكذا من الأصل

U.S. presses Egypt on NPT

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States, raising pressure on a key aid recipient, voiced disappointment on Friday at Egypt's opposition to permanently extending a landmark nuclear treaty and warned that Cairo should honour a promise not to campaign actively against the U.S. position.

Egypt, resisting months of U.S. pressure, announced at the United Nations on Thursday that it could not support indefinite extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because of Israel's failure to join the pact.

In an emotional speech, Foreign Minister Amr Musa told a conference reviewing the 25-year-old pact that Israel's refusal to make concessions on its nuclear programme meant the NPT is incapable of safeguarding Egypt's national security.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, at a news briefing on Friday, told reporters: "Naturally, we're very disappointed by Foreign Minister Musa's speech."

He said Egypt had assured the United States it would not campaign against the indefinite extension of the NPT, and stressed that "we expect Egypt to honour that assurance."

Egypt is a key U.S. ally in the Middle East and the number-two U.S. aid beneficiary behind Israel, receiving more than $2 billion annually.

NPT advocates say the treaty is crucial to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, but critics say it legitimises an inequality between nuclear and non-nuclear states.

Mr. Burns reiterated U.S. confidence that its position in support of making the NPT permanent without conditions would prevail when the 178 countries who are members of the arms control regime vote during the second week of May.

But U.S. officials were dismayed by Egypt's decision to use its opening speech to the review conference to argue against indefinite extension, which is also endorsed by three other nuclear powers — France, Britain and Russia.

China has hedged, saying it could support indefinite extension or extension for periods of 25 years each.

Egypt went beyond just articulating its own viewpoint, however. Mr. Musa said Egypt will try to forge opposition to the U.S. position at a meeting next week in Indonesia of foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Nations.

"We're obviously not happy about the prospect of further meetings to argue against an indefinite extension of the NPT... I don't have to tell you how important that is for our foreign policy," Mr. Burns said.

He said Washington would continue to press its disappointment and its case for making NPT permanent with Egypt in private. He declined to say if Egypt's 1996 aid package could be jeopardised.

Of seven Arab states that have spoken since the four-week NPT conference opened Monday, none has backed permanent extension, although Kuwait — which a U.S.-led international force liberated from Iraqi control in 1991 — called Wednesday for a lengthy renewal.

Iran may sign the NPT — but only under certain conditions, Iranian President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani said Friday.

His statement comes amid a diplomatic row over Russia's plans to build a nuclear power plant in Iran. The U.S. government, which accuses Iran of planning to build a bomb, is pressuring Russia to cancel the deal.

"We have certain conditions before we sign this treaty," he said during a visit to Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. "We will announce (them) when it is time to sign."

Mr. Rafsanjani did not say what those conditions might be.

ORTHODOX EASTER: Jerusalem Greek Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros II walks with the "sacred fire" during the Orthodox Easter ceremony on Saturday at the Holy Sepulchre in East Jerusalem, the site of the tomb of Jesus according to Christian tradition. The ceremony, celebrated in the same way for 11 centuries, is marked by the appearance of "sacred fire" in the two oval cavities on either side of the Holy Sepulchre (see page one) (AFP photo)

U.S. urges tougher sanctions on Libya

WASHINGTON (USIS) — The spokesman said the United States favours tougher sanctions against Libya in the wake of this week's outlaw flight by a Libyan passenger plane carrying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, State Department spokesman Nicholas Buens said Friday.

At the same time Mr. Nicolas Burns voiced U.S. displeasure with Saudi Arabia for allowing the plane to land, servicing it, and allowing it to return to Libya. He also cleared Egypt from any wrong-doing in the incident.

"The Egyptian government denied overflight clearances to the Libyan aircraft and informed us of that action yesterday," he said. "The Libyan aircraft chose to ignore the denial of Egyptian overflight clearance: Egypt, therefore, did not violate the U.N. sanctions and we will work with the Egyptian government to prevent future Libyan violations in the future."

"We've expressed to the Saudis our very strong position that their actions were contrary to the sanctions regime and should not recur," the spokesman said. "We've communicated our very strong position that U.N. member states have a responsibilkity to adhre to U.N. sanctions regimes. And in this case, the Saudi government had an opportunity to do so and chose not to do so and of course we're very displeased by that," Burns said, adding he had no details on the Saudi response to the U.S. demarche.

Further action rests with the United Nations Sanctions Committee which is expected to meet soon, he said. "We will be very active in that committee."

He said Egypt acted properly this week by taking their concern about the rights of Libyan religious pilgrims to the Sanctions Committee, formally asking for and receiving an exception to the sanctions against Libya.

Egypt had a concer "shared throughout the Ara world that Libyan pilgrim ought not to pay for th mistakes and the irrespons bility of the Libyan gover ment over the past decade o the issue of international te rorism," the spokesman said

"That is why we agreed t the action of the U.N. San tions Committee to grant a exception. It provides fo 6,000 Libyan pilgrims t travel via Egypt Air on 4 flights duringthe hajj season We thought that was national response to a huma nitarian need," Burns said "I think that all the govern ments in the region ought t understand that there is proper way to go about get ting these things done an there are improper ways."

"We continue to believe that it makes sense from a humanitarian point of view for Egypt Air to be given the opportunity to transport these people to Mecca. We will not interfere with that," he said. "We believe it's a good decision and we will continue to support it."

Libya's decision to ignore the U.N. ban on internation al flights to and from Libya "strengthens our belief tha we ought to tighten interna tional sanctions on Libya and they certainly at a mini mum ought to be main tained," the spokesman said "Libya has proven once again this week that it has no re gard for U.N. resolutions and Libya ought to pay the price for that. Paying the price will be the continuation of those sanctions.

"The United States has a very direct interest in this We believe that Libya is re sponsible for the bombing o Pan Am 103 in which a considerable number of American citizens perished. And we're not going to support any move to loosen the sanctions on Libya until the people who perpetrated that injustice many years ago are brought to justice."

U.S. protests lack of Saudi help in bomb probe, Libya flight

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States has protested Saudi Arabia's role in thwarting efforts to seize a man wanted in connection with the 1983 bombing that killed 241 American troops in Lebanon, officials said.

They also said Washington complained to Saudi Arabia for allowing a Libyan jetliner to land and take off from the kingdom in violation of U.N. sanctions.

These differences underscore the limits of cooperation between the two countries. The United States considers Saudi Arabia a major Mideast ally and sent thousands of troops to defend the kingdom after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, speaking to reporters, confirmed the essence of a story that was first reported in Friday's Los Angeles Times.

Asked if Saudi Arabia had failed to cooperate with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) in trying to seize a man wanted for his reputed role in the 1983 car-bombing in Lebanon, he said: "Yes. We expressed our concern that we had not had the cooperation we hoped to have."

Mr. Christopher refused to go into detail, but he said "it was a fairly short time frame (in which authorities could act) and we simply did not get the kind of cooperation we had hoped."

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the number two diplomat in the Saudi embassy in Washington was called to the State Department on Friday morning, adding: "We're disappointed... I know that a protest was made today."

The Los Angeles Times said FBI officials were secretly sent overseas recently to take custody of a man who has been hunted for a decade for alleged roles in the 1983 carbombing that killed 241 U.S. troops in Lebanon and for a 1985 Trans World Airlines hijacking in which an American died.

The newspaper said the man is believed to be Imad Mughniyah, a leader of the militant Hizbollah group.

The FBI aimed to seize him on a stopover in Saudi Arabia during an April 7 Middle East Airlines flight headed from Khartoum to Beirut, but before they could act Saudi Arabia decided not to cooperate and refused to allow the plane to land, the newspaper said.

The Saudi embassy here had no immediate comment on the U.S. allegations. At the time of the Mughniyah incident, Saudi authorities told the airline there had been a bureaucratic mix-up in paperwork involving the flight number.

In the 1983 attack, a powerful bomb, detonated by the driver of a truck, exploded at a building occupied by U.S. troops in Lebanon. The bomb exploded around dawn, while most of the occupants were still asleep.

The Los Angeles Times said Mughniyah was one of four people charged with crimes related to TWA Flight 847 in a sealed indictment in 1985. Of the four, Mughniyah was the only one kept secret for fear that he might retaliate against American hostages then being held in Lebanon.

The other matter involved the U.N. Security Council's decision this week to let Egyptair, the Egyptian airlines, conduct 45 flights of Muslim pligrims from Libya to Saudi Arabia. Before those flights got underway, a Libyan jet without U.N. authorisation flew to Jeddah with 150 pilgrims.

Libya was banned from flying planes outside the country in 1992 for not surrendering for trial two men indicted in the United States and Britain for bombing Pan Am Flight 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 killing 270 people.

Mr. Burns said: "We have discussed this issue with the Saudi government and we've expressed... our very strong position that their actions were contrary to the sanctions regime and should not recur."

The Libyan plane crossed Egypt en route to Saudi Arabia. Mr. Burns said Egypt denied overflight clearances but Libya ignored the order. "Egypt, therefore, did not violate the U.N. sanctions," Mr. Burns said.

Mr. Burns said the United States will take up the violation with the U.N. Sanctions Committee.

Eurocouncil may expel Turkey

STRASSBOURG (AFP) — A motion to suspend Turkey from the Council of Europe comes up for debate next week at a plenary session of the council's parliamentary assembly opening here on Monday.

It will be the fourth time inside a year that Turkey's human rights record has come under discussion by the same assembly. Turkey's military intervention against Kurds in northern Iraq, has fueled anti-Turkish sentiment yet further.

Socialist members called in January for Turkey to be excluded, but the president of the assembly, Miguel Angel Martinez (Spain) was against the move at the time.

Those who opposed sanctioning Turkey have always argued that the Turkish regime was a barrier to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism but this argument is no longer believed to hold true.

"The Kurdish conflict has encouraged fundamentalism among the Kurdish population," the Council of Europe's deputy secretary-general, Peter Leuprecht, told AFP.

Turkey's position has become increasingly uncomfortable as its actions are seen to violate the principles of human rights and democracy which the council of Europe was founded to defend.

The assembly has several times protested to Ankara over the jailing of eight Kurdish parliamentary deputies accused of supporting Kurdish separatists, and has called for their release.

It has also accused Turkey of bad faith in efforts to end the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus.

The European Human Rights Commission is currently investigating several hundred complaints about human rights abuses against Turkish Kurds. Three have been taken up by the commission.

New democracies in Central and Eastern Europe who have recently joined the Council of Europe want to become members, have contrasted the tough conditions imposed on them with the tolerance Shown towards Turkey, Mr. Leuprecht said.

Blast suspect 'driven by rage'

(Continued from page 1)

The connection to the bombing was established after authorities issued a composite sketch of suspects Thursday.

His next hearing will be on Thursday.

Less than an hour before he was to be released, authorities in Perry were notified by the FBI they were holding one of the men portrayed in the composite sketches. Without the call from the FBI, McVeigh would probably have been released on bail, said John Maddox, Perry district attorney.

Investigators planned to resume searching for clues on Saturday at the Michigan farm of James Nicholas, the brother of Terry Nicholas. James Nicholas is also cooperating with authorities, officials said.

Neighbours said they had seen McVeigh spend time at the Nichols family farm in Decker, about 130 kilometres south of Detroit.

The farm was the object of a raid on Friday as dozens of federal agents began searching for bomb-making materials. Law enforcement officials said agents were seeking evidence to link Terry Nichols, also reported to have a military background, to the bombing.

Both Nichols brothers had ties to the Michigan Militia and fostered anti-government ideas, neighbours said.

"They don't like to pay taxes, they don't like lawyers," said Randy Izydorek, who lives in the area.

Mr. Izydorek said Terry Nichols and McVeigh were in the military together and belonged to a more extremist, underground paramilitary group known as the Patriots. The group has "plans to eliminate the government," he said.

"I just wish they would hang him here so we could watch it," said Therese Collins, 28, of Perry, where people stood for hours just for the brief glimpse of McVeigh. Many brought their children.

"It helps put a face on evil, to let our kids know that people did this and people will be punished," said Clark Marks, also of Perry.

In New York, the Post and the Daily News, both tabloids, ran the picture of McVeigh leaving the Perry jail on their front pages.

The Post headlined: "The face of evil."

The Daily News headline was: "Damn you."

Courts helped 'The Emigrant' director — lawyer

CAIRO (AFP) — An Islamist lawyer who lost his case to ban a hit film by Yousef Shahin on Saturday accused the appeal court of collaborating with the director to get the film back on Egypt's cinema screens.

Mahmoud Abu Al Faid has asked for a postponement of a fresh legal bid to get the film "The Emigrant" banned so he can investigate the accusations, which he said was made by a "citizen" in the northern town of Alexandria.

The citizen said he heard "collaborators" of Mr. Shahin say in March that the appeal court would throw out Mr. Faid's legal case — a week before the court did just that.

A Cairo court banned "The Emigrant" on Dec. 29 after a complaint brought by Mr. Faid backed by the Al Azhar institution, the country's highest Sunni Muslim authority.

Mr. Faid argued that the film was blasphemous because it personified Joseph, who is a prophet in Islam.

But the appeal court overturned the ban in March on the grounds that Mr. Faid was not qualified to bring the complaint.

Mr. Faid's fresh case against the film will open on May 20 after Mr. Shahin's defence lawyer also asked for an adjournment to prepare the case.

Two other challenges to the appeal court's verdict — one brought by Islamist lawyer Abdul Halim Ramadan and the other by the Sufi mystic sect — will be heard on May 9 and May 23 respectively.

A third challenge is being mounted by a Coptic Christian lawyer, Husni Hilmi Abadir, who argues that "The Emigrant" distorts the biblical version of Joseph's life.

Mr. Shahin's film tells the epic story of Ram — a figure based on the biblical Joseph, son of Jacob, who 3,000 years ago leaves the parched land where he lived with his tribe for Egypt to study agriculture.

Some 750,000 Egyptians saw the film before the ban.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Flooding claims 10 lives in Afghanistan

KABUL (AFP) — At least 10 people were killed in flooding caused of heavy rains in northern Afghanistan, state-run Radio Kabul reported Saturday. The rainstorm hit the Chai Aab district of Takhar province last week, but the information only reached here Saturday due to communication difficulties, the report said. The flood waters destroyed or damaged 1,400 houses as well as 300 hectares of crops, the radio added. In March, 354, people were killed and 50 others injured in northern Badakhshan province when a massive landslide triggered by torrential rains buried a remote village in the troubled mountainous region.

Man beheaded in Saudi Arabia

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia has executed a man for murder, raising to 37 the number of people beheaded in the conservative kingdom this month. Saudi Television, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said the man was beheaded on Friday in northern Saudi Arabia after a religious court convicted him of murder. It named him as Mohammad Ben Hamad Ben Ali Al Ftayh Al Yami, but did not give his nationality. Saudi Arabia applies strict Islamic Sharia law and beheads murderers, rapists and drug traffickers. Public beheadings, mainly of drug smugglers, have been on the rise this year. According to unofficial counts, 96 people have been executed in 1992. Some 85 were beheaded in 1993, the last year for which unofficial figures are available.

Iranians obey order to take down satellites

TEHRAN (AFP) — Most Iranians have obeyed a Saturday deadline set by the government to take down their satellite dishes which allow them to tune in to foreign television channels. No dishes could be seen in residential districts of Tehran, while the official agency IRNA said they had also disappeared from other large cities in Iran. Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati, who warned last week that police would move in on Saturday to take down satellite dishes, thanked Iranians for "voluntarily" applying the ban.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 ..... Animated Classics
15:00
Feature film: "The Biggest Battle"
16:30 ..... Tarazan
17:00 ..... Les Ratons Laveurs
17:30 ..... Envoye Special
19:00 ..... News In French
19:15 ..... Ushuaia
19:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
20:00 ... Masterpieces of Literature
20:30 ..... Almost Home
21:10 The Other Side of Paradise
22:00 ..... News in English
22:20
Feature film: "For Love Alone"
23:59 ..... The Hidden Room
00:30 ..... Grace and Favour

PRAYER TIMES
04:31 ..... Fajr
05:54 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
12:34 ..... Dhuhr
16:12 ..... 'Asr
19:14 ..... Maghreb
20:37 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel, 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590, **Church of the Annunciation** Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman
Tel. 811295

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Temperatures are expected to rise with winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman 6/22
Aqaba ..... 14 / 28
Deserts ..... 4 / 24
Jordan Valley ..... 13 / 29
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18, Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 46 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Ratib Zaitoun 888685
Dr. Yahya Abdul Salam 736072
Dr. Sa'id Ali 788285
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoujh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu ..... (—)
Alquds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital ..... (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..... (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital ..... (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:35 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
08:45 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
10:00 ..... Damascus (RJ)
10:05 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
10:55 ..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:15 ..... Beirut (RJ)
11:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain, (RJ)
18:15 ..... Brussels (RJ)
18:20 ..... Paris (RJ)
18:55 ..... London (RJ)
19:10 ..... Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:40 ..... Athens (RJ)
20:50 ..... Vienna (RJ)
21:00 ..... Rome (RJ)
21:00 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
21:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
22:00 ..... Rome (add) (RJ)
22:15 Frankfurt, Paris (add) (RJ)
23:59 ..... Madrid (add) (RJ)
01:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)
01:45 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
04:45 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
11:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
13:40 ..... Bahrain (GF)
14:30 ..... Moscow (SU)
16:15 ..... Rome, Damascus (AZ)
21:05 ..... Cairo (MS)
21:20 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:20 ..... Istanbul (TK)
23:30 ..... Athens (OA)
01:10 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
07:25 ..... Aqaba, Frankfurt (RJ)
10:30 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
11:35 .... Aqaba, Rome (add) (RJ)
11:55 ..... Vienna (RJ)
12:00 ..... Rome (RJ)
12:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 ..... Madrid (add) (RJ)
12:30 ..... Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:50 ..... Athens (RJ)
21:00 ..... Dhahran (RJ)
21:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
21:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
21:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
22:25 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:00 ..... Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
23:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
23:30 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
23:40 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
23:45 ..... Sanaa (RJ)
23:45 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
01:30 ..... Damascus (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:30 ..... Rome (AZ)
13:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
14:30 ..... Doha (GF)
15:05 ..... Moscow (SU)
22:00 ..... Cairo (MS)
02:35 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 ..... Athens (OA)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN
Dep. Amman ... 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman .... 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 700/ 500
Banana 600
Banana (Mukammar) 600
Cabbage ..... 140 / 70
Carrot 180/100
Cauliflower 160/ 120
Cucumbers (large) ..... 80 / 50
Cucumbers (small) ..... 170 / 90
Eggplant 250/ 150
Garlic 400/270
Grape Leaves ..... 900 / 800
Green beans ..... 240 / 140
Lemon ..... 650 / 500
Marrow (large) ..... 80 / 60
Marrow (small) 220/ 100
Mulukhia ..... 300 / 250
Onion (dry) 170/ 100
Orange 540/400
Peas 450/ 350
Pepper (hot) ..... 450 / 300
Pepper (sweet) ..... 400 / 250
Potato 280/ 200
String Beans ..... 260 / 180
Tomato 140/80

Bahraini official arrives for talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Bahraini Research and Studies Centre Sheikh Salman Ben Hamad Ben Issa Al Khalifah arrived in Amman Saturday on a several-day visit to Jordan and was received at the Royal Court by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. The Crown Prince and Sheikh Salman discussed Jordanian-Bahraini ties and ways to advance them.

In an arrival statement, Sheikh Salman said he was happy to visit Jordan and expressed hope that his stay would contribute to enhancing relations between the two Arab countries.

He said he will hold talks on means of furthering cooperation between the Bahraini centre and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) with the objective of exchanging expertise and studies.

The Bahraini official also voiced hope that the visit would contribute to activating cooperation among scientific and educational institutions in Jordan and Bahrain with the aim of finding a common scientific language to revive the Arab nation's integration and solidarity.

"Time has proved the importance of Arab solidarity and closing the ranks of the Arab countries," the sheikh said, adding that he hoped that obstacles impeding Arab reconciliation would soon be removed.

The Bahraini sheikh was received at the airport by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's cultural secretary, Director of the Crown Prince's Office Michel Hamarneh, Prince Hassan's advisor Ihsan Shurdom, RSS President and Secretary General of the Higher Council of Science and Technology Hani Mulqi, Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority Ahmad Jweibir, Director General of the Royal Geographic Centre Brigadier Salim Khalifeh and Bahraini Charge d'Affaires Abdul Rahman Al Suleiti.

Shortly after his arrival, Sheikh Salman visited the Royal Geographic Centre where he was briefed on its establishment, development and duties.

JPA to swear in members; but suspended weeklies still sceptical

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Thirty-five members of the Jordan Press Association (JPA) will take the oath for JPA membership today, but it is still unclear whether this long-awaited ceremony will help solve the issue of the two weeklies, Hawadeth Al Sa'ah and Al Bilad; suspended from publication since February.

JPA President Suleiman Qudah said he hoped the issue will be solved and the two weeklies will start reprinting again. But chief editors of both newspapers are sceptical.

Al Bilad publisher Nayef Tourah said the Press and Publications Department would come up with new excuses to reject any new nominee for the chief editor post. He said Al Bilad had so far presented the applications of four nominees for the post, but all four were rejected by the department.

Last February, Hawadeth Al Sa'ah and Al Bilad were suspended on the basis that their chief editors were not considered JPA members, according to head of the Press and Publications Department (PPD) Mohammad Amin.

In a statement issued at the time and distributed to Al Dustour Printing Press — where the weeklies are printed — and to the two newspapers, Mr. Amin said the two publications should be suspended because their chief editors did not take the oath.

According to the Press and Publications Law, chief editors of daily and weekly newspapers, except for political party publications, should be JPA members. Mr. Qudah said that the two nominated chief editors, Yusuf Ghishan of Al Bilad and Jamal Shawaheen of Hawadeth Al Sa'ah, did not enjoy full membership since they have not been sworn in.

The law does not specify any date for holding the swearing-in ceremony. The last time JPA members took the oath was July 8, last year.

Mr. Qudah said he filed several requests over the past two months to hold the ceremony, but Minister of Information Khaled Karaki, who presides over the event, had a busy schedule. He said the JPA did not take any action in the past since all the PPD's demands were all "legal." But if procrastination tactics are still used after the swearing-in ceremony takes place, the JPA would take a different stand, he said.

Mr. Qudah said the association is in contact with the concerned authorities and is exerting all efforts to solve the issue as quickly as possible, but "they (the PPD) have their own legal reasons," he said.

"As long as the measures taken are legal, we can't possibly protest or do anything," said Mr. Qudah, also president of the International Journalist Organisation, and chief editor of Al Ra'i newspaper.

"If there were any violation of the law, we will certainly take action," he added.

The two weeklies, Hawadeth Al Sa'ah and Al Bilad, had filed cases in court to contest the suspension decision. While Al Bilad filed its case only two weeks ago, because "they had hopes that a compromising solution would be reached," according to Mr. Tourah, publisher of Hawadeth Al Sa'ah, Riad Hroub, took the PPD to court a week after the suspension was effective.

The court's ruling in Hawadeth Al Sa'ah's case is expected to be pronounced on Tuesday.

"We are not concerned about the swearing-in ceremony," Dr. Hroub said. "It is a farce. They are playing games with us."

"We are awaiting the court's ruling," he added. "All what we are concerned about is whether the government or a minister or director can have the right to suspend a publication."

'Europe requires feasibility studies to support Jordan's water projects'

AMMAN (Petra) — A parliamentary delegation which concluded a visit to Germany recently, Saturday said the absence of feasibility studies on water and dam projects in Jordan was hindering European support to such projects.

At a meeting with the Lower House of Parliament Finance Committee in the presence of Planning Minister Jawdat Khalaf and Post and Communications Minister Jamal Saraireh, the delegation said Jordan thus far did not complete feasibility studies on water and dam projects to be carried out in implementation of the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty.

This, they noted, makes it difficult for Europe to help Jordan in carrying out these water projects whose costs amount to about $400 million.

They said Germany, for instance, was willing to help the Kingdom, but it is faced with the problem of lack of feasibility studies on projects to be carried out in Jordan.

They stressed that German officials they met with had emphasised that there were many opportunities available to the Jordanian side and that Jordan should move to benefit from them.

The delegation members stressed the importance of establishing close coordination between the Lower House of Parliament and the Ministry of Planning to formulate plans to attract foreign investments to Jordan.

Dr. Khalaf told the meeting that the Ministry of Planning usually receives European officials and businesspersons and familiarises them with investment opportunities in the country.

She said the ministry will present the House Finance Committee with a full report on such activities.

At the outset of the meeting, Dr. Khalaf briefed the parliamentarians on the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's recent visits to France and the U.S. and issues the King discussed with officials in the two countries, particularly with regard to supporting the Jordanian economy after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

She said the U.S. pledged to work on writing off the remainder of the $480 million in Jordanian debts to the U.S. before the end of this year.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FILMS

Film (in German) entitled "Der Zerbrochene Krug" at Goethe Institut at 7:00 p.m.

Film entitled "Gothic" at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 12:00 noon and 9:00 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

Poetry recital by Mohammad Lafi, Hanna Abu Hanna, Mahmoud Al Tal, Yousef Abdul Aziz, and Shawqi Baghdadi at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 8:30 p.m.

JEWELLERY DISPLAY

An exhibition of jewellery inspired by the culture of Dhana (designed by Ammar Shammash in cooperation with the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature) at Darat Al Funun.

LECTURE

Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "Israeli Culture Towards Arabs and Arab Culture" by Dr. Ibrahim Abu Jaber at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- ☆ Exhibition of plastic art by several Jordanian artists at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.
- ☆ Exhibition of paintings by Mahmoud Sadeq at Afia Art Gallery.
- ☆ Photography exhibition entitled "Fuentes de la Memoria" at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).
- ☆ Exhibition of water colour and oil paintings by Jordanian artist Sa'id Haddadin at Orfali Art Gallery.
- ☆ Exhibition of paintings by Samer Osama at the French Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Exhibition of paintings by Mohammad Mahrul Din Adhim at Balqa Art Gallery, Fuheis.
- ☆ A collection of photos of Middle East doors by Julia Reinholt at the Gallery, off the main lobby, Inter.Continental Hotel.
- ☆ Exhibition of art by Moroccan artist Farid Belkhahia at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.
- ☆ Exhibiton of copper sculptures by Iraqi artist Mohammad Hussein Judi at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.
- ☆ Exhibition of graphic works by Rafiq Lahham at Darat Al Funun. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

Jordan, Egypt discuss maritime transport between Aqaba port, Suez Canal

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Saturday met with Mohammad Izzat Adel, Chairman of the Suez Canal Authority, who is currently on a several day visit to Jordan and reviewed with him cooperation between Jordan and Egypt, especially in maritime transport.

In a statement following the meeting, Mr. Adel said that he briefed the prime minister on the outcome of talks he had held with Minister of Transport Samir Kawar and other officials on issues of comon concern as well as trade and shiping in the Suez Canal.

Mr. Adel, who voiced his country's desire to coordinate matters in shipping and trade, said he felt that Jordan was ready to cooperate fully with Egypt in these affairs. Asked about future cooperation between Aqaba and Egypt's ports, Mr. Adel said that in the era of peace the Aqaba port is a vital outlet for the Suez Canal.

It is in the interest of the Suez Canal Authority to see Aqaba port developed and the volume of shipping through it increasing, and the Suez Canal Authority is doing all it can to help Jordan achieve this goal, he said.

Present at the meeting was Mr. Kawar as well as Dureid Mahasneh, the director general of the Jordanian Ports Corporation and Egypt's ambassador to Jordan, Wajih Hamdi.

Earlier, Mr. Kawar and Mr. Adel met to discuss mutual cooperation in maritime transport between Aqaba and the Suez Canal Authority.

They both voiced their countries' desire to promote bilateral cooperation in the interest of their two peoples.

According to Mr. Adel, the current meetings are held to complement discussions held earlier between officials from the two countries.

Mr. Adel said he was certain that the two sides will reach a formula on cooperation in serving vessels that sail through the Suez Canal and pass through Aqaba, transporting goods for Arab countries.

According to the Egyptian official, the talks are aimed at giving facilities in the Suez Canal to the port of Aqaba.

Should an agreement be signed in this respect, it would be the first of its kind to be concluded between the Suez Canal Authority and any port around the world, granting the Jordanian port facilities and serving the interest of the Egyptian and Jordan people alike, Mr. Adel concluded.

According to a statement following the talks, the two sides discussed among other topics reduction on fees for tourist vessels which pass through the Suez Canal heading for Aqaba in order to encourage vessels to dock at the Jordanian port.

The Jordanian side requested Suez Canal fees on Jordan's exports of phosphate, potash and cement be reduced.

The statement said the two sides agreed in principle to hold follow up meeting and to set up technical committees to work out details of agreements concerning the reduction of fees.

Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb meets with visiting Chairman of the Suez Canal Authority Mohammad Izzat Adel (Petra photo)

Head of Kingdom's Gaza interest section named

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Foreign Ministry has named Ziad Majali, director of its Political Department, as head of the Kingdom's interest section in autonomous Gaza Strip, a spokesman said Saturday.

Ahmad Mbeideen, head of the information section of the foreign ministry, also said the ministry had yet to locate suitable premises to house the interest section.

Mr. Mbeideen said Mr. Majali, 43, who has more than 15 years of service in the foreign ministry, would travel to the Gaza Strip next week along with two other foreign ministry officials to scout for an office and residential quarters.

The team will come back to Amman after completing the formalities related to the facilities and then return to the Gaza Strip to formally open the interests section.

"We expect the office to be open and functional by late May or early June," Mr. Mbeideen told the Jordan Times. The precise title of Mr. Majali was not immediately known, but it is likely to be "head of mission," he said.

The Jordanian interest section will be the fourth Arab liaison office in the Gaza Strip. Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have already opened similar offices in the Gaza Strip, which, along with the West Bank town of Jericho, went under Palestinian autonomy in May 1994.

Mr. Majali has served as attaché at the Jordanian embassy in former Yugoslavia and at the Kingdom's mission in Washington. His last diplomatic posting outside was as first secretary at the Jordanian mission in Cairo, Egypt.

The Jordanian interests section is expected to be opened by the foreign minister, Abdul Karim Kabariti. Officials said the delay in opening the interest section was mainly due to the heavy schedule the minister had been keeping since assuming office in January.

It will be Mr. Kabariti's first visit to Gaza as foreign minister as and when he travels to the Mediterranean strip to open the office.

Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) agreed in January that the Kingdom would open the interest section in the Gaza Strip to liaise between Amman and the PNA. The agreement was part of a broad accord signed by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and PNA President Yasser Arafat, who is also chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

A foreign ministry team visited the Gaza Strip in late February and held talks with Mr. Arafat, PNA Planning Minister Nabil Shaath and other officials of the self-rule authority on Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation and issues related to the interests section.

The Jordanian decision to open an interest section in the Gaza Strip is seen as a move aimed at consolidating the Palestinian question to formally establish their identity in the occupied territories.

Jordan was among the first Arab countries to extend recognition to the independent state of Palestine proclaimed in November 1988 by the Palestine National Council in Algiers. The Kingdom was also the first Arab country to upgrade the status of the PLO office in Amman to that of a diplomatic mission.

In practical terms, the interests section in the Gaza Strip would serve as a key reference point for all technical matters related to Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in various sectors.

The office will also be authorised to validate Palestinian documents for acceptance in Jordan. These will include birth and death certificates, export documents, educational certificates etc.

Jerusalem's Anglican bishop sends Easter message of love

AMMAN (J.T.) — On the eve of Easter Sunday, His Eminence Samir Kafity, the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, issued the following Easter message focusing on the significance of the holy city to the Christian faith:

"From this point on the Mount of Olives, at 2,500 feet above sea level, we are looking over Jerusalem, the mother city of our Christian faith. Our Lord himself caught sight of Jerusalem from a place near here, and spontaneously wept over it. His tears came because Jerusalem did not recognise the things which were best for its peace.

This year at Easter tide, we are all looking to Jerusalem and at Jerusalem. We see it, along with our two sisters' Abrahamic faiths, as a 'mother.'

While there is much to cause us to weep over it, we can also see this city as the starting point for the joint journey of peace and justice for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Let us view the city through the eyes of St. Paul and see Jerusalem as 'Free, the mother of us all,' as he puts it in Galatians 4:26.

The motherhood of Jerusalem for Jews, Christians and Muslims equally and without discrimination, is perhaps what Jerusalem could offer us this Easter."

Jerusalem contains the only cathedral in the world with an empty tomb. Here is the city where the son of God died a cruel death on a cross. Here also he rose from the dead. Death simply could not hold the Prince of Life.

The empty tomb of Jerusalem has for us this tremendous message of hope and new life, the resurrection, the triumph of love. God's love, over every evil, the triumph of life over death, the triumph of light over darkness."

Sudan, Jordan sign agreement to cooperate in higher education

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Sudan Saturday signed an executive programme for the implementation of an agreement on cooperation in higher education.

The agreement, signed by Minister of Higher Education Rateb Saoud and visiting Sudanese Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Ibrahim Ahmad Al Omar, calls for exchange of visits by faculty members to deliver lectures, cooperation in general research work conducted in Sudanese and Jordanian universities, exchange of expertise between centres for scientific research, organising seminars on topics of mutual interest and visits by students from the two countries.

Under the terms of the agreement, Sudan will grant Jordanian students six scholarships for post graduate studies, and Jordan will grant Sudan five post graduate scholarships at Jordanian universities for the academic years from 1995 through 1997.

The two sides will also exchange publications, research reports and literary work.

Dr. Al Omar said Sudan was looking forward to increasing cooperation with Jordan in various domains. He voiced his delegation's appreciation of Jordan's readiness to cooperate with his country.

Dr. Saoud expressed hope that Sudan and Jordan would reach an agreement on twinning their respective higher educational institutions in order to further promote joint work in higher education and research fields.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Parliamentary team in Oman for talks

MUSCAT (Petra) — A Jordanian parliamentary delegation led by Senate Speaker Ahmad Lawzi Saturday opened talks in Muscat with Omani Deputy Premier Fahr Ben Mahmoud Al Saeed and Abdullah Quteibi, head of the Omani shura (consultative council). Mr. Lawzi briefed the Omani leaders on the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, stressing that it secured the restoration of Jordanian lands and water resources. Mr. Lawzi voiced Jordan's support for any inter-Arab dialogue and expressed the Kingdom's continued desire to promote its relations with Oman and the Arab Gulf states. Mr. Quteibi said Oman was keen on maintaining the strongest possible ties with Jordan and supports its endeavours at the pan-Arab and international levels. He said that Oman realises the numerous challenges facing the Kingdom and hopes that other Arab countries take positive stands towards the country.

King Abdullah Canal undergoes maintenance

AMMAN (Petra) — Work is under way to raise the efficiency of the King Abdullah Canal in the Jordan Valley and saving at least 10 per cent of the water that is currently lost or wasted, according to Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Secretary General Hashem Shboul. He said in a statement Saturday that the JD 9.65 million project which will be completed in 30 months entails general maintenance of the canal, raising the walls, clearing and dredging the water way, removing residues and earth that collected from flood rains, and maintaining the canal gates through which water flows. Once the project has been completed, said Mr. Shboul, a great deal of water that used to be lost through cracks in the canal and worn-out gates would be saved. Mr. Shboul said that the project is being partly financed through a $5 million loan obtained from the European Investment Bank.

The University of Jordan, cordially invite you to attend a series of lectures for a group of Birgham Young University Professors (U.S.A), according to the following schedule:

Date	9:00-10:30	10:30 11:00	11:00-12:30
MONDAY 24/4	University of Jordan, Said Al Mufti Auditorium		
	Dr.Merritt "Lake Quality Studies and Evaluations"	Coffee Break	Dr.Rollins "Damage Potential Mapping to Define Influence of Local Soil Conditions on Earthquake Damage"
TUESDAY 25/4	Ministry of Water and Irrigation ,8th floor Auditorium		
	Dr. Merritt "Optimal Design of Sewer Systems"	Coffee Break	Dr. Miller "Automated Water Shed Runoff Analysis"
WEDNESDAY 26/4	University of Jordan, Said Al Mufti Auditorium		
	Dr. Merritt "Satellite Hydrology"	Coffee Break	Dr.Rollins "Identification and Mitigation Measures for Structure on Collapsible Soils"

OPEN INVITATION

Ad.Tech

Key evidences found at Japan cult complex in Fuji City

TOKYO (R) — Japan's police reportedly have linked through physical evidence a poison gas attack last month in Tokyo's subways with a doomsday cult, news reports said Saturday.

The Yomiuri newspaper said police found specially homemade plastic bags, the same type of containers used in the March 20 attacks, at the complex of the Aum Shinro Kyo (Aum Supreme Truth Sect) at the foot of Mount Fuji west of Tokyo.

At a building called the "Seventh Satian" at the Kamiku Ishhiki Complex, police also found a liquid dispenser used to pour sarin into the bags and the same organic solvent, di-ethyl aniline, that was found on Tokyo subways after the attacks.

Inside subway carriages, police found 11 bags made of three layers of plastic which were pricked with a needle to release liquid sarin which vaporised. No firms make these plastic bags.

Twelve people died and 5,000 passengers were injured in the March 20 attack.

The bags were sealed three times using a special laminating machine, which was found at the sect's building in Fuji City, just south of their main complex. Yomiuri said.

Yomiuri and Asahi Shimbun also said police would soon take sect guru Shoko Asahara into custody to question him about the allegations. More than 100 followers have been arrested, including six top officials, but Ashara has not been seen in public since the day before the subway attack.

Police refused to comment on the reports.

Meanwhile, police in Tokyo's twin port city Yokohama were looking for a man who "smelled like pepper" and was thought to be linked to Japan's third poison gas attack in a month.

Thousands of police were thrown into the hunt for those responsible for Friday's latest attack at a Yokohama department store in which 27 people were taken to hospital.

It followed an attack Wednesday at Yokohama's main railway station in which 500 people were briefly hospitalised and a March 20 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system where 12 died and 5,000 were injured.

Witnesses said they felt a pain in their throat when a man who "smelled like pepper" walked past them.

Police suspect the man may have released the unidentified fumes as he rode on escalators in the multi-floor store.

Sarin gas was not used in either attack in Yokohama, Japan's major port near Tokyo.

Police refused to rule out the possibility the same group was behind all three attacks.

But they also were worried the Yokohama attacks might be copy-cat incidents which could divert police resources from the main focus of Japan's biggest-ever police investigation, the subway horror which set off the nation's present mood of fear and lack of confidence in itself as a safe society.

In other police leaks to Japanese newspapers Saturday, the Aum sect was portrayed as planning to take over the Japanese government in five years and have one of the world's most powerful military by 1999.

The Mainichi newspaper quoted the sect's 1991 document as saying: "Aum founder and leader Shoko Asahara will be imprisoned in the 1990's but his trial will prove the existence of supernatural powers and all 100 million Japanese will become followers of Aum."

Factory blast causes huge fire in U.S.

LODI, New Jersey (AP) — A chemical plant explosion ignited a roaring fire Friday that spread to several nearby buildings and sent flames and smoke billowing high into the sky. At least 11 people were injured.

Flames rose as high as 1,000 feet (300 metres) into the air and debris from the explosion landed blocks away from the Napp Technologies Inc. complex, authorities said.

About 400 people were evacuated from several blocks around the plant, said Elaine Makatura, spokeswoman for the State Department of Environmental Protection.

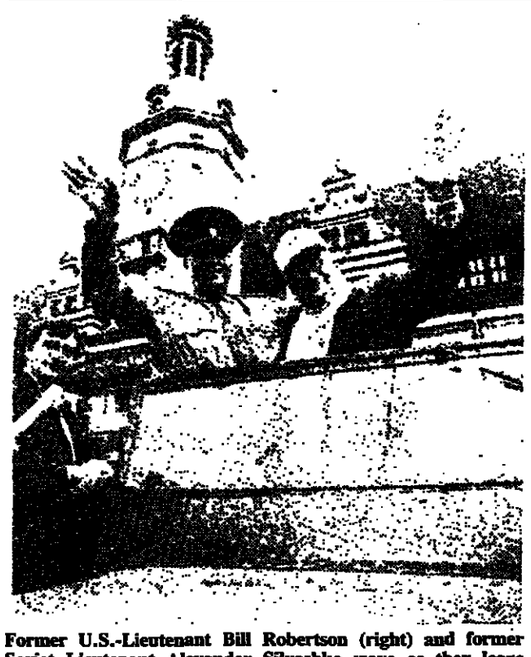
"We're pretty confident that there's nothing environmentally dangerous going into the air, but we want to be sure," said Mayor Philip Toronto.

Residents were urged to close windows and keep pets indoors.

Employees said about 100 people worked in the plant, but most would not have arrived by the time of the blast, shortly before 8 a.m.

Hackensack Medical Centre said it was treating 11 people injured in the explosion. Spokeswoman Theresa Alaimo said eight were in fair condition and one was in critical condition. The conditions of the other two were unavailable.

At least eight of the injured are plant employees, Mr. Makatura said.



Former U.S.-Lieutenant Bill Robertson (right) and former Soviet Lieutenant Alexander Silvashko wave as they leave onboard a jeep for a revival patrol tour of Torgau. In Torgau, on the Elbe River, U.S. and Soviet army patrols met in April 1945 for the first time during World War II (AFP photo)

Veterans shake hands where U.S., Soviets met

TORGAU, Germany (R) — A former Soviet soldier and an American comrade, whose embrace half a century ago symbolised Nazi Germany's doom, shook hands again Friday in the town where they and their allied armies had first met.

U.S. and Red Army veterans, William Robertson and Alexander Silvashko, whose 1945 photograph proved to weary allied nations that victory over Adolf Hitler was imminent, returned to Torgau to commemorate their historic meeting.

Fifty years ago next Tuesday, the two reached out to each other across the ruins of a blown-up Elbe River Bridge in the East German city, a meeting which marked the beginning of the end of the Eastern and Western Fronts.

"At the time I felt something heroic had happened," said Mr. Silvashkov, a Belorussian now aged 73 who wore a bemedalled dark suit for the reunion.

Mr. Robertson, then a lieutenant in the U.S. First Army, had memories of less euphoric feelings.

"For me it was also a triumph over the German Wehrmacht," said the 71-year-old, clutching a white baseball hat during the ceremony in a local medical school's hall. "But I thought World War II was still far from over."

In fact Nazi Germany, which Hitler had vowed would rule for 1,000 years, capitulated just two weeks later on May 8.

Later Friday the two veterans re-enacted the journey Robertson and three other U.S. soldiers made from their nearby base to the bridge the retreating Germans had destroyed.

The unique meeting had been a total surprise. The Americans' trip had started out as a routine patrol of the area until, as they approached the town, they heard for the first time that the Soviet army was just across the river.

The Soviets were suspicious at first, until a Russian who had been captured by the Germans on the western Elbe bank called out to his comrades that the Americans had arrived.

Robertson and Silvashko clambered over the bridge's ruins to meet, and both still sounded relieved 50 years later that the symbolic but dangerous gesture had not gone wrong.

On Tuesday, the actual anniversary, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Silvashko and other veterans — including former German soldiers — will join local people in a memorial service at Torgau's War Cemetery.

By the time the two armies met at Torgau, east of Leipzig and deep within what became the Soviet occupation zone and later East Germany, the Americans and British had occupied most of Germany.

Under the allied accord made at Potsdam, the U.S. army had agreed to move back west and hand control of a large chunk of land around nearby Leipzig over to the Soviets.

The bridge itself was later rebuilt by the East Germans and dedicated to peace.

Malaysia Front woos voters with development dollar

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — With two days before Malaysia goes to the polls Monday, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad's powerful National Front coalition has ratcheted up its campaigning, launching projects throughout the country and promising more development dollars to states who vote it.

Mr. Mahathir left the north western state of Penang Saturday for one last pitch at opposition-controlled Kelantan state but not before he opened a 92 million ringgit ($37.3 million) hospital, launched an 96 million ringgit ($38.8 million) indoor stadium, opened a vocational school and witnessed the signing of a 160 million ringgit ($65 million) state-wide water supply project.

It was Mr. Mahathir's second visit in two weeks to Penang state, where the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP), Malaysia's largest opposition party, is fighting an aggressive polls battle with the front.

On his way to Kelantan, Mr. Mahathir, who has mounted a tireless whirlwind campaign tour from populous Penang to rural townships in the North Borneo state of Sabah, will stop over at the mining state of Perak to open a 34 million ringgit ($13.8 million) vocational school.

On Friday, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Mr. Mahathir's heir apparent launched a 1.9 billion ringgit ($769 million housing project in the country's southernmost state of Johor.

Opposition-run Kelantan state, through a supplementary National Front manifesto, was promised one billion ringgit ($405 million) in infrastructure development if it voted in the coalition by the Front's state chief Annuar Musa Thursday.

Kelantan, currently in the firm grasp of an opposition fundamentalist Islamic party, was also promised that some 100,000 job opportunities would be created if the Front succeeds.

"We will deliver what we have promised if we're given the mandate to rule once again in Kelantan," the Sun newspaper quoted Mr. Annuar as saying

He said Mr. Mahathir had given his blessings and an assurance of the government's commitment in fulfilling the manifesto.

In small villages where Malaysia's Orang Asli or indigenous people live, roads are being upgraded and power generators presented to villagers by candidates.

Carter calls for probe of Pakistani murder

ATLANTA (R) — Former President Jimmy Carter called on Pakistan to give top priority to its investigation of the murder of a 12-year-old boy who was one of the country's leading campaigners against child labour.

Calling the shooting death of Iqbal Masih a tragic loss, Mr. Carter also said American consumers could help to curb the exploitation of children in the Third World by questioning the origins of foreign-made carpets.

"It is not often that people risk their own lives to bring hope and liberation to others," Mr. Carter said in a statement.

Masih worked as a carpet weaver from the age of four, when he was sold by his parents to a factory, until he was 10, much of the time shackled to a loom, according to his account to an international labour conference in Sweden last November.

After learning of a law aimed at preventing exploitation of children two years ago, he declared his own freedom and organised efforts to educate other children about their rights. Mr. Carter said the boy's campaign had liberated hundreds of children until he was shot dead Sunday as he and two friends rode their bicycles in his village of Muridke.

A labour reform group to which Masih belonged has said landowners or carpet markers were behind the murder, but police say all reports point to a man whom the boy and two relatives had seen having sex with a donkey.

"Whatever the outcome of the investigation, which I hope the government of Pakistan will make a top priority, the loss of this courageous human being is tragic," Mr. Carter said.

The Carter Centre said Pakistani human rights lawyer Hina Jilani, a member of the centre's International Human Rights Council, also is investigating the murder.

The former president belongs to an advisory committee that recommended Masih for a human rights award from athletic-shoe manufacturer Reebok International Ltd in 1994.

A Vietnamese schoolgirl places burning incense on war veteran's tombs in Long Khanh, which fell to the North Vietnamese 20 years ago. Long Khanh, 80 km north of former Saigon, was the scene of heavy fighting during the war (AFP photo)

Hanoi plans muted celebration of 1975 Vietnam War victory

HANOI (AP) — Vietnam's leaders, wary of upsetting the trend toward better ties with their former American enemy, plan a toned-down celebration of the Communist victory over U.S. ally South Vietnam 20 years ago this month.

"We will celebrate solemnly but thriftily," said the minister of culture and information, Tran Hoan, at a news conference Friday. Mr. Hoan is head of the committee planning events to mark the capture of Saigon by Communist forces on April 30, 1975.

Organisers have arranged a modest civilian and military march rather than a full-blown military parade in the former South Vietnamese capital, known today as Ho Chi Minh City. Parades are expensive and require too much rehearsing and equipment, Mr. Hoan said.

The government has also given the celebration a lower priority than the 50th anniversary this September of Vietnam's declaration of independence from colonial France after World War II. Events for National Day, as it's known, will continue from Sept. 2 until the end of the year, Mr. Hoan said.

In contrast, the official victory bash in Ho Chi Minh City will last just a few days. Events will include the march as well as dragon dances, outdoor concerts, speeches by Communist Party leaders and ceremonies to honour dead soldiers.

The government hopes to emphasise the theme of reconciliation and its desire to make friends with all countries as it seeks to modernise its war-ravaged economy. The celebration, therefore, should help improve Vietnam's relationship with the United States, not hurt it, Mr. Hoan said.

Relations between the United States and Vietnam have improved dramatically in the past few years. President Bill Clinton ended a 19-year economic embargo against Vietnam last year, and the two countries set up liaison offices in each other's capitals in January.

U.S. officials say they're pleased with Vietnam's cooperation so far in efforts to learn the fate of 1,621 U.S. servicemen missing in action from the war — still the main obstacle to full diplomatic relations.

Some congressmen want to upgrade ties with Hanoi and exchange ambassadors as early as this year, but a minority of activists and relatives of some of the missing men insist the Vietnamese must do more to help on the MIA issue first.

Ghali: No need to restructure U.N.

JAKARTA (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali Saturday denied the organisation needed to be radically restructured, saying it was fully capable of coping with the world's current problems.

"I believe the U.N. has the possibility to deal with the problems of the post cold war. We do not need a change, a drastic change," Dr. Ghali told a forum on foreign policy here.

Dr. Ghali, who arrived here Friday for a four-day visit, said that what was needed was not a restructuring of the organisation but "the political will" of member states.

He said that the main problem with the effectiveness of the United Nations was that member states could not agree how to use the United Nations to solve international problems.

A growing number of developing countries have called for reforms to the United Nations to make it more effective and more attuned to the world's problems which have changed vastly in the 49 years since the organisation was set up.

Included in the reforms called for was the restructuring of the U.N. Security Council, expanding its permanent membership from the current five.

Dr. Ghali said that the U.N. was already undergoing administrative reforms, including a reduction in the numbers of its international civil servants as well as its budget.

"We are doing the reforms but at the same time, we're receiving increasing demands from member countries," he complained.

He said such demands included calls for technical assistance, human rights protection, for help in the process of democratisation and intervention in peace keeping operations.

He said that one of the main problems facing the United Nations was finding donor countries. "It is getting more and more difficult to find a donor country," the secretary-general said.

4 rebels killed in Philippine bombing

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines (R) — Four Muslim rebels were killed and six others wounded when Philippine warplanes bombed an island near the southern city of Zamboagna, the military said Saturday.

The Thursday bombing of Sacol Island was part of a military hunt for the remnants of fleeing bands of Muslim extremists who raided the town of Ipil on April 4 and killed 53 largely unarmed civilians, Marine Colonel Ponciano Millena told Reuters.

He said the bombing was necessary because ground troops found it hard to pursue the rebels on the island covered mostly by swamp.

"It is very difficult to operate in the swamps which has been the haven of criminals and lawless elements. You could easily get stuck in the mud, making it hard for our men to go after the enemy," he said.

The bombing, which occurred at 15-minute intervals, caused some panic among coastal residents as they felt the ground shake during each attack.

About 40 more rebels are being pursued, including 15 who are believed to have participated in the Ipil raid, Col. Millena said.

More than 200 heavily-armed guerrillas, linked to the Muslim fundamentalist group Abu Sayyaf, caused widespread damage in Ipil, 790 kilometres southwest of Manila.

President Fidel Ramos ordered an all-out offensive against the attackers and gave the military 60 days to round up the rebels.

The rebels killed 20 of the hostages they had seized during their flight, survivors said.

The government said its troopers had killed 41 Ipil raiders.

Military checkpoints have been installed in Zamboanga and other major commercial centres on Mindanao Island to prevent a repeat of the raid.

The rebel Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which has entered into peace negotiations with government has repeatedly denied any participation in the raid.

MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari, from his residence in the Middle East, said his group is committed to the peace process.

Meanwhile, police have arrested eight Muslims in a swoop on a Muslim community Thursday night for illegal possession of firearms. They will be questioned about their links with the Abu Sayyaf.

President Ramos Friday called for officials and the people to support the government in fighting Muslim extremists.

Simpson jurors rebel over removal of guardians

LOS ANGELES (R) — Most of the jurors in the O.J. Simpson murder trial rebelled Friday over the removal of three sheriff's deputies who had been guarding the panel.

Thirteen members of the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates refused to board the bus that takes them daily from their hotel to the courtroom, demanding that Judge Lance Ito come talk to them. They eventually agreed to go to court but all wore black as a sign of protest and said they would refuse to enter the jury box until they had spoken to the judge.

Court sources said two of the mutinous jurors, both female blacks, broke down and cried Thursday when they learned that the three deputies had been removed on Judge Ito's orders.

In an effort to deal with the most serious crisis yet in a case that has been beset with problems, Judge Ito was meeting in his chambers with individual jurors on a voluntary basis.

A court spokeswoman said any juror who wanted to talk to the judge was welcome to do so. She said the judge was talking to jurors with lawyers from both sides present as well as to Commander Patrick Holland of the Sheriff's Department.

Legal analysts said Judge Ito was faced with the very real prospect of having to declare a mistrial unless he could defuse the explosive atmsophere in the jury room.

"He is going to need the wisdom of Solomon to resolve this thing," Sheriff Sherman Block commented on KTLA TV. He said he sympathised with the plight of the jurors, who he said had fewer liberties than prisoners in the jails he supervises.

The jury has been sequestered since Jan. 11 — virtual prisoners in their hotel — and racial tensions reportedly are rampant, but Friday's rebel included black and white jurors.

Six jurors have already left the panel and the pool of alternates has dwindled from 12 to six. With the case proceeding at a snail's pace and looking as though it could last another six months, the prospect of not having enough jurors by the end of it looms large.

Simpson, a football hero turned popular sportscaster and TV pitchman, has pleaded not guilty to the stabbing deaths of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, who were murdered outside Nicole Simpson's townhouse on the night of June 12, 1994. Simpson was arrested a week later and has remained in jail ever since.

Judge Ito had the deputies — two white males and a white female — relieved of their jury duties Thursday after he interviewed a female black juror who asked to be taken off the panel.

"I can't take it anymore," the 25-year-old juror said, according to a transcript of their meeting. "It's just a combination of things throughout the last three months."

Serious troubles were brought to light last week when dismissed juror Jeanette Harris went public on television, saying the panellists were torn by racial strife, that jurors had fought physically and that some deputies were promoting racial tensions by favouring white panellists

Corrosion is weakening Taj Mahal — expert

NEW DELHI (AP) Corrosion of metal rods side the Taj Mahal is weak ing the 17th century tomb news agency reported Frid Iron fasteners that hold h marble slabs together dangerously corroding, the monument could colla if the corrosion spreads areas which support the h onion-shaped dome, said K.I. Vasu, a scientist, in interview with Press Trust India news agency. Dr. Va a former head of the Cent Electrochemical Research stitute, a federal laborat that studies corrosion, s gested a detailed investi tion of the structure to det mine the extent of corrosi Because of the corrosion, marble inside was cracki and chipping, Dr. Vasu sa The decay can be stopped replacing the iron fasten with those made from so rust-resistant alloy, he sa The corrosion is the lat danger to the once pea white marble tomb in Ag that is yellowing because sulfur gases from factor around. India's Suprem Court has ordered closure 200 of the worst polluti factories around the T Mahal, but thousands others continue to spew smoke. The increase in number of tourists has led more cars and buses, agg vating the problem. Air sa ples collected around the T 125 miles (200 kilometr south of New Delhi, we found to contain as much eight times the permissi quantities of suspended ch micals.

Surviving Dionne quints want compensation

MONTREAL (R) — Th three surviving Dionne qui tuplets expect the Ontar government to respond th week to their demand f compensation for being e ploited as tourist attractio during their depression-e childhood, one of their so said. Cecile, Annette Yvonn Dionne, who are 60 yea old, asked for Canadian do lars 10 million ($7.3 millio in compensation in a lett sent to Ontario Premier Bo Rae last November. In th letter, they said they we exploited by the governme during their childhood northeastern Ontario in th 1930s. "From our birth, w were taken hostage, deprive of personal liberty witho being allowed to go out public, and financially e ploited until our majority they said. When the quint plets reached 21, the age majority, they were ea given Canadian dolla 160,000 ($116,000) from trust fund established wi profits from their commerci endorsements. "In my opi ion, they should have r ceived Canadian dollars million ($3.65 million)," Be trand Dionne, Cecile's s and spokesman for the si ters, said. "These wom were kept in a fishbowl f the benefit of the public.

Lesbian loses custody fight for son in Virginia

RICHMOND, Virginia (I — A 25-year-old lesbian lost legal battle for custody of h son on Friday when the Vir nia Supreme Court ruled th her sexuality could put t child at risk of social con mnation. In a case watch closely by gay rights grou across the United States, t justices split 4-3 in overtu ing a lower appellate co ruling allowing Sharon B toms to regain custody three-year-old Tyler Do tou. Legal experts said t woman is expected to seek rehearing of the case. noted that reversals are ra "The mother is an u custodian at this time, the child's best intere would be prompted awarding custody to grandmother," Justice Christian Compton wr Suzanne Goldberg of N York's Lamda Legal Defe Fund said the ruling dep from a national trend which judges have ruled men and women to be co petent parents. Her gr supported Bottoms in friend-of-court filing th asked justices to base th decision on historical e dence rather than on "s culation" about proble that may lie ahead for child. The court said the was evidence that Botto has a history of moving fr place to place, that she re on the support of others

100 killed in

Rebels storm Sri Lanka army camp, 34 dead

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil rebels Saturday overran an army camp in eastern Sri Lanka killing at least 20 soldiers, wounding 41 others and losing 14 of their own men, in the worst attack since they ended a three-month truce, officials said.

Ignoring international criticism of their renewed military campaign for independence, the Tigers brought the death toll from fighting in the country's northeast to 56 in three days, according to the military officials.

Dozens of guerrillas from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stormed the army camp in Kaddamuruvi Kulam in the coastal Batticaloa district, killing at least 20 soldiers and wounding 41 others, the officials said.

Another 11 troopers were missing following the attack, the worst since the Tigers ended their truce with the government Wednesday by blowing up two navy vessels and killing 12 sailors in northeast Trincomalee.

The military here said that security forces had retaken the camp and brought the "situation under control" following nine hours of fighting in which 14 LTTE cadres were also killed.

"We have reestablished the camp. The Tigers have fled the area after the attack," chief military spokesman, Brigadier Nihal Jayakody, said.

At least 36 security personnel and 20 LTTE cadres have died in fighting since the LTTE unilaterally pulled out of the truce.

About 120 troops were in the camp when the rebels, firing mortars, rockets and small arms, pounded and torched the base before fleeing in the face of army reinforcements rushed to the scene with air support, officials said.

Prior to their initial onslaught Wednesday, the LTTE announced it was withdrawing from peace negotiations aimed at resolving the protracted ethnic conflict that has killed more than 30,000 in the past two decades.

As the fighting intensified President Chandrika Kumaratunga cancelled her planned trip Sunday to France where she was to attend a meeting of Sri Lanka's aid donors later this month.

The increased violence came despite the European Union's (EU) appeal to the Tigers not to escalate the war and Washington's strong criticism of the rebels for breaking the truce.

In a statement Friday, the EU urged the LTTE not to "escalate the hostilities" and "give a positive answer" to the government's peace drive and commence negotiations "on the elements of a political solution."

Saturday's LTTE strike came shortly after the guerrillas killed four policemen in an ambush in neighbouring Trincomalee district and wounded another three elite police commandos in the adjoining Ampara district.

Mrs. Kumaratunga has described the LTTE attacks as "a temporary setback," and at a public rally in southern Matara Friday she vowed to resolve the conflict "with or without" the backing of the LTTE.

The navy Saturday thwarted a bid by the LTTE to blow up three of its vessels

U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi (centre) sits with the U.N. in New York at Sarajevo Airport on a chair and negotiates via satellite telephone (AFP photo)

N. Korea leaves open possibility of talks

TOKYO (R) — North Korea left open the possibility for the first time Saturday that it might reopen talks with the United States on their deal to end the Communist state's suspected weapons-producing nuclear programme.

A statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo, said Pyongyang was studying a proposal by the United States to hold higher-level talks after meetings between technical experts broke down in Berlin this week.

The talks stalled over North Korean opposition to the U.S. proposal that rival South Korea supply reactors to replace Pyongyang's present models which produce plutonium that could be used in nuclear weapons.

"Just after the negotiations broke off, roving ambassador of the U.S. State Department Robert Gallucci proposed political talks with the DPRK (North Korea) in the first week of May in Geneva," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

"We will take a necessary decisive measure after getting a detailed report of the negotiations from the DPRK delegation and sounding out the real intention of the U.S. side on the government level."

The comment backed away from what appeared an outright rejection of higher-level talks by North Korean delegates when the Berlin talks broke down Friday, a deadline set by Pyongyang for settlement of the issue.

Nerve gas attack at Disneyland foiled

NEW YORK (R) — Federal authorities say they foiled an apparent "terrorist" plan for a Japanese-style gas attack on Disneyland amusement park over Easter, the Baltimore Sun reported.

In its Saturday editions the newspaper, quoting unnamed federal officials, said the suspected attack was interrupted when two Japanese travellers were picked up at Los Angeles International Airport.

The Sun said the two Japanese men were picked up shortly before Easter after Tokyo police alerted the FBI that they were flying in. The paper said it did not know the current status of the two men.

According to the newspaper, the two are associated with the cult Aum Shinri Kyo which is suspected of releasing sarin nerve gas into the Tokyo subway last month killing 12 people. The sect has denied any links to that attack.

The two were said to have carried written instructions on how to manufacture sarin and a videotape revealing details of plans for an attack.

Federal officials, according to the newspaper, were earlier contacted by Disneyland executives after they received a letter suggesting something was going to happen at the park in Anaheim, California.

The Sun said President Bill Clinton had referred to the case without disclosing specifics when he referred to a "possible terrorist incident" which he said federal authorities had been ready to try and prevent.

Mr. Clinton mentioned the case as an example of unseen counter-terrorist activity by the government.

The Sun said federal officials had not denied the information but said they could not discuss that sort of case on ongoing investigation. An FBI spokesman, Paul Bresson said there would be "no official comment at this time."

The newspaper reported that the case had resulted in eight members of a special team that deals with chemical agents being sent to Disneyland to assess the danger on April 13 three days before Easter.

Italy's right more united than left for Sunday's regional elections

ROME (AFP) — Campaigning for Sunday's Italian regional polls, seen as a trial run for general elections demanded by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, ended with a show of unity by rightist parties while the left seemed more divided.

All four main parties of the right and centre-right attended a rally Friday night in Rome.

Gianfranco Fini, leader of the far-right National Alliance, was given a standing ovation while Rocco Buttiglione — a recent arrival in the rightist camp centred on Berlusconi — made a strong anti-Communist speech.

Mr. Buttiglione accused the Communists of "seeking to take money from the real workers," comments which drew thunderous applause.

He was rejected earlier this year by his Popular Party — formerly the centrist Christian Democrats who until 1994 dominated post-war Italian politics — when half the members of the movement's executive elected to replace him as leader.

For its part the Italian left, headed by Massimo D'Alema's Democratic Party of the Left — formerly the Communist Party — appeared somewhat divided, which could cost it dearly in Sunday's poll.

The single-round voting system under which the election is being conducted tends to favour larger coalitions such as the Berlusconi-led alliance.

In contrast, several factions will be competing against each other for the left and centre-left vote.

The Northern League, a former ally of Mr. Berlusconi whose defection last December forced the media magnate's administration out of office after seven months in power, he decided to go to it alone. So has the Marxist Refounded Communist Party.

some 43 million Italians are eligible to vote, but the campaign has not attracted huge crowds.

To boost their campaigns, both the left and the right have tried to woo Italy's popular former Judge Antonio Di Pietro, who spearheaded the massive anti-corruption Clean Hands campaign until his resignation in December.

Both sides are trying to capitalise on his immense popularity, despite repeated assertions by Judge Di Pietro that he is not interested in politics.

Italians however are not convinced, and were not surprised when Mr. Berlusconi announced last week that he had met the former Milan judge.

The weekly Expresso magazine then quoted Judge Di Pietro as denying that such a meeting took place, but admitting he spoke to Mr. Berlusconi on the phone.

The left siezed the opportunity to accuse Mr. Berlusconi, but was left with egg on its face after Judge Di Pietro Friday said he had indeed met the television magnate to "discuss politics."

Meanwhile a leading candidate for Mr. Berlusconi's Forza Italia party in the southern town of Sorrento was arrested Saturday for alleged corruption, judicial sources said.

Marco Fiorentino, Who is the town's mayor, was favoured for reelection Sunday.

Akashi, envoys leave Sarajevo

Ghali threatens to withdraw peacekeepers

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi and four Western diplomats left Sarajevo together by plane Saturday, bowing to threats from Bosnian Serb rebels who had prevented the quartet from entering the city.

The plane with the officials took off at 2:30 p.m. (12:30 GMT) from Sarajevo Airport en route for Zagreb, an AFP correspondent at the airport said.

The diplomats, including two representatives of the international Contact Group on former Yugoslavia, were effectively forced out of the city after being stranded at the airport since Friday afternoon, while Mr. Akashi said Serb leaders had snubbed his calls for talks to resolve the impasse.

The four officials were U.S. and German Contact Group experts Robert Frasure and Michael Steiner, U.S. charge d'affaires John Menzies and U.S. diplomat Jack Zetakulic.

Mr. Steiner said the group had "come for peace negotiations," adding: "It's not positive for the Bosnian Serbs that we have to leave like this."

Lieutenant Colonel Gary Coward, spokesman for General Rupert Smith who heads U.N. forces here, said the stand-off marked a "watershed" in developments in Bosnia.

He added that the Serbs had at the last minute agreed to allow the diplomats into Sarajevo.

But "sadly they attached a number of conditions which were unacceptable to both Mr. Akashi and the diplomats," he said.

The U.N. official said the Serbs had demanded that the diplomats leave Sarajevo early Saturday evening and agree to meet Bosnian Serb leaders at Serb-held barracks in the city's Lukavica suburb.

At 1:50 p.m. (1150 GMT) the Bosnian Serbs "admitted that they had perhaps made a mistake," Col. Coward added.

Mr. Akashi earlier Saturday agreed to leave the Bosnian capital for Zagreb with the diplomats after Serbs pressured him to take the quartet out with him, marking the latest in a series of humiliations he has suffered.

The envoy, who had tried in vain for two days to get Bosnian Serb and Bosnian government forces to agree to respect and extend a much-violated ceasefire that expires on May 1, said he had been unsuccessful in trying to meet with Serb leaders to resolve the issue.

Forced to postpone his scheduled departure from the city Friday after being threatened if he did not leave with the diplomats, Mr. Akashi said he had tried repeatedly through Saturday morning to arrange a meeting with Serb leader Radovan Karadzic or his military chief General Ratko Mladic. But "neither was available."

He said Mr. Karadzic might have been able to meet later, but added, "I cannot wait that long and the feeling of myself and of the diplomats is that we should go back to Zagreb."

Col. Coward said U.N. civilian affairs chief Enrique Aguilar was en route Saturday for Pale, the separatist Serbs' mountain stronghold near Sarajevo, to try to see Serb leaders.

The crisis blew up when the diplomats arrived at the airport Friday afternoon aboard the U.N. Yak-40 aircraft that was to have flown Mr. Akashi back to Zagreb. The Serbs charged that they had not been consulted over the diplomats' presence on the flight.

The suburb where the airport is located was overflown Saturday by several planes from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation — AA-10 Thunderblots known as "tankbusters" — that released heat flares to divert possible missiles.

Standoffs between the Serbs besieging Sarajevo and U.N. and international officials have intensified recently.

Last week, the Serbs refused permission to the then U.S. ambassador to Bosnia Victor Jacovic to leave Sarajevo by U.N. plane.

Russian helicopters attack Chechen bastion

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian Helicopter gunships Saturday fired on a key rebel stronghold of Bamut in western Chechenya but ground troops made no fresh attempts to take the heavily fortified village, Interfax News Agency said.

It said four helicopter gunships raided Bamut, about 50 kilometres southwest of regional capital Grozny, in the morning. "Sporadic shoot-outs flare up every now and then but the federal troops do not launch any active operations," Interfax said.

Bamut, where separatists have resisted Russian troops for more than three months, is a gateway to mountainous rebel-held areas in southern Chechenya.

The Russians, who seized most of the central and northern parts of the breakaway region during a military campaign begun last December, are keen to gain control of the mountainous south as soon as possible.

Interfax said Friday 19 Russian servicemen were killed in the latest bid to seize Bamut which began earlier this month. On Wednesday they captured the village for just one day but had to retreat because of heavy rebel shelling from nearby hills.

Interfax quoted the Russian military as saying Friday troops had advanced into the mountains through areas bordering another Russian region, Dagestan, Chechenya's eastern neighbour. There was no independent confirmation of the report.

Meanwhile an anti-war demonstration that began in Moscow six weeks ago and had been blocked by soldiers on the way to the Chechen capital finished quietly Friday at Grozny's bombed-out presidential palace.

About 120 people — most of them Chechen women, Buddhists and Russian soldiers' mothers — gathered at the downtown Peoples' Friendship Monument. About half of them then marched down a bombed-out street to the palace square a half-mile away.

A small crowd of curious passersby gathered to watch the Grozny protest Friday, and some joined in. They had not heard of the marchers, since Grozny has been without electricity or newspapers for months.

"I don't know the exact aim of this march, but I'm against Russia," said Khamad Zhuzhaev, 52, who jumped into the protest in Grozny. "Chechenya doesn't need a big brother."

Others said they supported the march but were afraid to join it. A handful of Russian soldiers with Kalashnikov assault rifles stood by. Three unarmed men in Russian uniforms broke into the circle of protesters at the monument and took pictures of them.

Protesters held signs with slogans such as "hands off Chechenya," and "soldiers: Every shot is a shot at your mothers," some appealed to Western leaders not to attend World War II victory celebrations as planned next month in Moscow.

The protest, organised by the Soldiers' Mothers Committee, was billed as a march from Moscow to Grozny, although protesters made much of the trip in cars and buses, including the drive into Grozny Friday.

Denied a permit to march in the Chechen capital last month, they had no permit this time but encountered no resistance from military authorities.

In recent weeks, they were blocked a few times around the village of Samashky, which was attacked by Russian Interior Ministry troops early this month, with heavy civilian casualties and widespread destruction.

On Friday, they took a northern route that avoided the village.

One of the protesters, Shumisat Zaurbekova, said she has three sons fighting with the Chechen rebels in their home town of Bamut, in southwest Chechenya.

"What can my sons do? They can't just lie down and sleep, they have to defend their home," she said.

A soldier passing by, who identified himself as Alyosha, said he didn't mind the protest but didn't think it would change anything.

"They're walking here now, but at night there's shooting," he said.

As for his own mother, he said, "she's here. She helps us — she cooks and helps do laundry."

In a separate development, the head of the Soros Foundation appealed publicly for help Friday in finding an American aid expert and his colleagues who have been missing in Chechenya for nearly two weeks.

Frederick Cuny, a consultant to the foundation, his interpreter and two Russian Red Cross doctors last contacted Soros officials by radio on April 9.

"This allows us to be somewhat optimistic," foundation President Aryeh Neier told a news conference Friday. "We think it's probable that they are alive and simply not able to contact us."

Mr. Neier said the foundation had not sent a search party to Chechenya, but had had flyers printed with Mr. Cuny's photograph and descriptions of Mr. Cuny and interpreter Galina Oleinik.

He said the foundation asked the U.S. embassy for help. An embassy spokesman said two embassy officers would go to Chechenya this weekend.

Polls: Chirac to be president, 2nd place unclear

PARIS (AFP) — Right-wing Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac seems certain to succeed Socialist Francois Mitterrand as French president, a clutch of opinion polls showed a day ahead of Sunday's first round of voting.

The polls were carried out this week and details were released by polling institutes Saturday, ahead of Sunday's vote for which some 40 million electors are eligible. The polls may not be published in France.

But Chirac's competitor in the May 7 run-off round was less certain, with pollsters predicting Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin either slightly ahead of his right-wing rival Edouard Balladur, or both politicians neck and neck.

Three polls out of six showed Mr. Jospin with a significant lead over Prime Minister Balladur, while the other three had the two men in a virtual dead heat.

Mr. Chirac and Mr. Balladur are from the same Rally For the Republic (RPR) party.

All the candidates were observing a truce Saturday as campaigning stopped at midnight Friday under electoral regulations.

One poll for the IPSOS institute, carried out for the weekly Le Point Thursday and Friday, gave Mr. Chirac 23 per cent of the vote, a score down by two points compared to a week ago.

IPSOS said that Mr. Balladur had 19 per cent of voting intentions (one per cent down) and Mr. Jospin18 per cent (two per cent down). A total of 34 per cent were still undecided.

The SOFRES institute, which also polled voters Thursday and Friday, predicted 24 per cent for Mr. Chirac, 20.5 per cent for Mr. Jospin and 16.5 per cent for Mr. Balladur. It gave the total number of undecided voters as 25 per cent.

French Prime Minister and presidential candidate Edouard Balladur (left) and his wife Marie-Josephe (next to him) taste a glass of St. Amour wine. France will go to the ballots April 23 for the first round of the presidential elections. The second round will be held on May 7 (AFP photo)

All the polls said that Mr. Chirac would emerge the victor in the election regardless of his rival in the second round.

National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen came in fourth place, with 14 or 15 per cent of the vote — roughly the same as his score in the last presidential election in 1988.

Communist candidate Robert Hue was close to 10 per cent, slightly up on the party's 1988 score, while the two extreme-left and ecologist candidates were predicted to obtain from four to six per cent.

The maverick right-wing candidate Philippe De Villiers would garner aboat six per cent, according to the polls which said that Jacques Cheminade, a relative unknown close to U.S. extreme rightist Lyndon LaRouche, would virtually disappear from slight.

The composition of the run-off will play a major role in determining how France's political landscape unfolds in the coming years, analysts said.

A Chirac/Balladur contest on May 7 would leave bitter scares within the rightist camp, as the two long-time political allies have locked horns with increasing vigour as elections day has drawn nearer.

It would also consign the French left to a further spell in the political wilderness after electors deserted the then governing Socialist Party in droves in March 1993 general elections and in voting for the European Parliament in June 1994.

With the left having contested every presidential run-off since 1969, a Chirac/Jospin duel would conform with tradition.

But even with the second-round support of Communist, Trotskyist and ecologist voters, Mr. Jospin is credited with no chance of winning.

The first-round elimination of Mr. Balladur would also permit his liberal wing and Chirac Gaullist wing of the RPR to secure a swifter reconciliation.

But that would not prevent the prime minister from carrying out his declared intention of leading a right-wing opposition to a Chirac presidency, notably on economic and social issues.

Polling stations open Sunday at 06:00 GMT. They close at 1600 GMT, except in Paris and other large cities, where voting will continue until 1800 GMT.

Polling institute computer projections collated on the basis of already-counted votes will be released as soon as polling ends. Final results are expected early Monday morning.

Up to 100 killed in Rwandan camp, aid workers say

KIGALI (R) — Aid workers in Rwanda said Saturday up to 100 people had been killed overnight in a packed camp for tens of thousands of Hutus, and United Nations positions were under fire from Rwandan governmnet troops.

The workers said up to 200 were wounded at Kibeho, where Rwanda's now Tutsi-dominated army has moved in to close the camp and pin down Hutus they believe took part as militiamen in last year's genocide of up to a million people, mainly Tutsis.

"There are definitely 100 to 200 wounded in Kibeho. The number of dead are unconfirmed because no one can get out to count the bodies but that is the estimate," said one official

"There is shooting in Kibeho right now. The U.N. Zambian force and other foreign elements are together under cover," the official, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.

Major Peter Seaman, of the Australian U.N. medical support force which has medical staff and guards in Kibeho, said stray fire from the Rwandan army was hitting U.N. positions.

"We don't believe they are firing at us but because the people (Hutus) are between us and the RPA there are some rounds hitting our position," he said.

Mayhem has broken out among hundreds of thousands of Hutus since Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) troops closed in on Kibeho and other camps for internal refugees in southwest Rwanda.

They fled there last year afraid of revenge by the Tutsi-dominated RPA after it overthrew the Hutu-led government that presided over the slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

For the past five days, frightened Hutus in Kibeho have packed into ever smaller spaces which aid workers fear could breed epidemics, some have tried to break through a tightening RPA cordon and savage fights have broken out among Hutus themselves with primitive weapons like knives and machetes.

Up to 22 were killed and 40 wounded Thursday night by RPA fire, fighting among the refugees and panicked stampedes.

The government in Kigali says it must close the nine camps in southwest Rwanda, which house up to 250,000 Hutus, because Hutu hardliners who carried out the three-month genocide are regrouping there and using them as training grounds.

The two main ethnic groups in the central African country have been at each other's throats for decades and, after the genocide, few people see any chance of reconciliation soon.

Aid workers said an adult and a child, shot in the back, were among those killed Friday. Many casualties arrived Saturday at a hospital in the camp with machete wounds.

One aid worker said some 7,900 Hutus had been allowed by the army to leave, many on foot. But up to 80,000 more were stuck inside the cordon and RPA troops opened fire on some trying to break out, suspecting them of being Hutu militiamen.

"Apparently the DPs (displaced persons) tried to break through the cordon and shots were fired. A number of DPs also tried to break into the Zambian compound and tried to seize weapons or take sanctuary and were ejected," Maj. Seaman said.

"There is also a lot of fighting between the DPs."

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Blazing trail at Qatar

THE CONVENING of the Arab Thought Forum's plenary session in Qatar on Wednesday and Thursday under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was a timely occasion to assess and study the challenges that have been facing the Arab World and to take a look at what might happen in the future. Having not convened since the advent of the Gulf crisis in 1990, two basic and very consequential events were identified as the most crucial developments that necessitated more than ever before the holding of the long-awaited meeting of influential Arab intellectuals. One was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and its dire results on the Arab Nation. The second was the process of peace in the Middle East and its culmination in the Palestinian and Jordanian peace agreements with Israel.

The Gulf war and the peace process that followed were described by Crown Prince Hassan as being not only most consequential but also as having caused shock waves across the Arab World which in turn triggered additional disarray and confusion. That is why the Crown Prince cautioned that the Arabs need to examine factually and soberly the two developments not for the purpose of adding recriminations but rather for attaining a better understanding and appreciation of the cluster of facts and circumstances that had led to them.

A true scientific and intellectual perusal of the genesis of the Gulf crisis can only serve as an effective assurance that a similar tragedy would never recur, the Crown Prince asserted. The same applies to the Israeli-Arab peace process which has caused further misunderstandings and mistrust between the Arab countries.

While the Arab intellectuals continue to be divided on what needs to be done in the aftermath of the Gulf war and many of them have their reservations and apprehensions about the peace process, most of them fortunately now agree that the solution to the Arab World's external problems lies with us here at home. We have to start with springing new roots for a new and viable Arab order based on respect for democracy, political pluralism, human rights and genuine economic development. This is a very important step forward indeed given the fact that Arab intellectuals had been divided down the middle until the recent past on the value of adopting these basic ingredients for creating a healthy and progressive society, especially for an ancient part of the world like ours.

The Arab intelligentsia has a pivotal role to play in the shaping of the Arab future and they must play it by taking the initiative. The time is now, and for that we can only laud the effort behind convening the Qatar meeting. It helped the cause immeasurably.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

EVERY TIME a terrorist act is committed, Western and Zionist fingers point to Arabs and Muslims whose image continues to be distorted in the Western media, said Sultan Al Hattab in commenting on the Oklahoma bombing. The writer said that while condemning all acts of terrorism, we point to the destruction of Chechenya and the killing of its people, the attacks on the Kurds and the Bosnians and the siege of 18 million Iraqis as acts of terrorism, far exceeding the horror of the Oklahoma people. The most horrible act of terrorism is perhaps the continued detention of 6,000 Palestinians and the repression to which the Palestinian people are subjected day and night, continued the writer. While we feel sad for the victims of the Oklahoma incident, we would like to remind the world of other victims of acts of terrorism in Somalia and Afghanistan, said Mr. Hattab.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour said that the Israeli Labour Party is bound to lose the elections of 1996 because it has failed to win the battle of peace. Mohammad Kawash said that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his Labour Party had won the previous general elections on a peace platform and pledges that the Jewish state will achieve peace with its neighbours and the Palestinian people. But, the writer said, Mr. Rabin and his government are still hesitant in their dealings with the Arab countries, especially Syria and have retreated from pledges to redeploy Israeli troops in the West Bank and organise the Palestinian elections. Of course, Mr. Rabin is afraid of the Likud opposition and is careful not to antagonise its leaders, said the writer, who added that such hesitancy and such breach of commitment towards the peace process are leaving the Labour government in limbo.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Jordan, Israel sign a meaningless agreement on tourism

IT SEEMS that cultural normalisation between the Arabs and Israel started to take place in the Israeli side with Israel starting to behave in an Arab manner and entering into meaningless agreements which like the wholesale agreements signed recently between Jordan and Palestine, do not commit the parties to do anything.

The Jordanian-Israeli accord on tourism, signed in Aqaba on April 4, may have satisfied a requirement by the peace treaty, but one can skip any or all of the 16 articles without gaining or losing anything. Most of the articles came to state the obvious, or to confirm the understanding of matters already taken for granted.

Article (1) calls for the development and encouragement of tourism between the two countries in accordance with laws and regulations in force in the two respective countries. The first part of the article is ambiguous, and the latter part does not need to be mentioned.

Article (2) calls on the two parties to study ways and means to facilitate tourism. It is natural that any party that needs to make a study can make it without having to wait for a signed agreement, approved by the authorities. In fact, such studies are abundant. They need permission from no one.

Article (3) calls for the exchange of information regarding tourism and travel. Such information is not confidential and is readily available if one follows up the press.

Article (4) deals with technical cooperation and training. According to Article (5) the two parties undertake to encourage tourism from other tourist generating markets. In compliance with Article (6) the parties will make the necessary efforts to enhance cooperation in the international circles.

Article (7) calls for the formation of a joint committee for studies and follow up. Article (8) allows the private sector to take part in the activities of the above mentioned committee. Article (9) requires the joint committee to meet at least once each year. Article (10) stipulates that the delegates to the committee will communicate in English. Article (11) gives authority to the committee to decide on its own agenda. Article (12) requires the committee to refer its decisions to the appropriate authorities of the two governments for approval. All of these arrangements can be implemented without having to sign a formal agreement.

In other words, the formation of a joint committee to meet once a year, draft its own agenda, communicate in English, and subject its decision to governments approval consumed six articles while they could have come in one.

Things become ridiculous with Article (13) which stipulates that the Ministry of Tourism in each country is the institution in charge of tourism. Someone must have thought that tourism comes under the ministry of agriculture or housing, and Article 13 was, therefore, thought to be necessary to exclude this possible mistake!

The last three articles came to clarify that ratification of the agreement should be made in accordance with the laws and regulations of both countries, that disputes should be resolved by negotiations and that the duration of the agreement is three years, renewable automatically unless one party serves the other a notice that renewal is not desired.

The key words in the agreement are: development, encouragement, facilitation, study, reinforcing, making good efforts, forming a committee... exactly the same non-commital words and phrases used extensively by Arab committees.

To summarise: The Jordanian-Israeli agreement on tourism is hollow, without any substance. Its value lies in the mere meeting and shaking hands across the table to accommodate TV cameras.

The authoritarian route to democracy

Rights have been trampled, and cracks are beginning to show in Armenia's facade of stability, writes **James Meek** in Yerevan

VOSKAN MAMIGONIAN has not seen his computer since he logged off for the night three days before the new year and drove home through the cold, unlit streets of the Armenian capital.

Minutes later he was racing back to the offices of Yerkir, the country's biggest daily newspaper, having just seen President Levon Ter-Petrossian's televised denunciation of alleged terrorist cells within the opposition party which backs the publication.

It was too late: the three-storey building near Yerevan's opera house was sealed off by police and troops. The newspaper was, and remains, closed.

"They asked everyone to leave the building to leave all their papers, all the material for that night's edition, which was almost ready," said Mr. Mamigonian. "It later turned out that everything had been confiscated — all computers, papers, accounts, safes, archives."

Armenia, united in its proxy war with the government of Azerbaijan and shielded from Western censure by a rich, well-organised emigré lobby, always prided itself on being an island of stability in the turbulent Caucasus compared to neighbouring Georgia and Azerbaijan, still racked by post-Soviet warlord chaos versus authoritarianism.

Now the cracks in Armenia's democratic facade are beginning to show. Doubts are growing over the legitimacy of parliamentary elections in July following the closure of 11 opposition publications and a six-month suspension of the main political party they had ties with, the ARF-Dashnaktsutiune, known as the Dashnaks.

Relays of the American-funded Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe by local medium wave transmitters were also halted. In all, 300 journalists and media workers found themselves out on the street.

The government is unrepentant, saying it had to act when it did, and forthcoming public trials of 19 people accused of murder and drug-trafficking would reveal all.

"That party was leading the republic to instability... the people would have lost faith in the government and the rest of the opposition," said a presidential aide, Jirair Libaridian, a United States citizen and a Dashnak member until 1988. "The Dashnaks would have presented themselves as the only party disciplined and powerful enough to restore law and order. This president will never allow Armenia to become a Weimar republic.

"Better to trample on the rights of the few temporarily, so that the republic has stability and continuity to have a change of power in a legitimate manner. I'm perfectly willing to see Armenia a little less democratic now — if that's what this means — as long as it's democratic for the next 50 years."

President Ter-Petrossian's television address on Dec. 28 followed the murder 16 days earlier of the former mayor of Yerevan, Hambartsum Galstian, a businessman-politician and former associate of the president who had subsequently fallen foul of the authorities.

In his speech, President Ter-Petrossian, announced the discovery of a secret terrorist organisation, DRO Special Services, operating under cover of the Dashnaks and functioning in Armenia since 1992.

Although he did not accuse them directly of Galstian's murder, the president said the DRO's Armenia battalion had carried out at least three assassinations, all neatly recorded in code in an archive, seized by police, of 506 computer diskettes and dozens of handwritten files. Murder was recorded as "printing" or "publishing."

The president said the DRO had raised money through heroin trafficking: Five kilogrammes of the drug had been seized, along with arms, ammunition, explosives and forged passports.

The following day, a presidential decree suspended the ARF-Dashnaktsutiune's activities. On Jan. 12, Armenia's supreme court legalised the move as a six-month suspension — meaning the ban will be lifted a week after the elections.

Even critics of the move accept that the concrete nature of President Ter-Petrossian's allegations implies some hard evidence against the suspects now held on remand.

But why, apart from political expediency, with the president himself acknowledging that most Dashnaks were unaware of the clandestine group, should he outlaw the whole party and shut down so many publications?

Polls suggest the ruling Armenian National Movement, led by Mr. Ter-Petrossian, would have lost out at the elections to both the Dashnaks and the communists. Under the terms of the ban, the Dashnaks will be able to stand only as non-party individuals.

"These elections are unfair right from the start," said Sieran Baghdasarian, a Dashnak MP. "It's not a level playing field. My opponents have a newspaper, they have finance, they have a structure allowed to operate, they can use television. I don't have these opportunities because the activity of my party has been stopped."

Although the president's decree was based on the DRO allegations, the supreme court decision was on different grounds: that the Dashnaks' ruling Athens-based "bureau" broke Armenian law by having foreign citizens as members.

Mr. Baghdasarian accepted that a majority of bureau members were not Armenian citizens — out of 13, one is Iranian, one Canadian, one French, three Lebanese and one Greek.

But he said the court and the Justice Ministry had refused to explain how he should legally sever the Armenian party's ties with the bureau.

The U.S. has expressed concern over the suppression of the opposition. But foreign governments are also conscious that, the less the voice of the century-old nationalist Dashnak movement is heard in Armenia, the easier it will be for the Ter-Petrossian administration to compromise with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Even the diaspora is anxious lest Dashnak protests harm the formidable lobbying power of Armenians abroad. Despite many similarities between the Yerevan-Karabakh and the Belgrade-Bosnian Serb relationship, the U.S. Congress has been persuaded to treat the former as victims and the latter as aggressors.

Yet concern remains about a compromised election and a general swing towards authoritarianism. Another opposition paper, Azg, backed by another party with its roots in the diaspora, was fire-bombed twice last year and two of its journalists were beaten up.

"Authoritarianism? Against a background of closing down these papers, banning the party, the fact that entrepreneurial activity can't develop freely in Armenia because they immediately sort you out if you don't tie yourself to the mafia structures now in power — you could say it was true," said Hakop Asatrian, an Azg reporter.

U.S. stung by China, Russia rebuffs

By Donald M. Rothberg
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Once again, the United States looks isolated in an uncooperative world as Russia and China rebuff arguments against selling nuclear reactors to Iran.

Unmoved by U.S. intelligence assessments that Iran is determined to acquire nuclear weapons, Moscow and Beijing responded that their deals with Tehran are legal under the nuclear treaty the Clinton administration wants renewed.

A striking aspect of the U.S. campaign against the Iran projects was how public it seemed. Whatever happened to private diplomacy, to secret talks where ranking diplomats work out differences far from the glare of publicity?

"It's hard for this country to conduct quiet diplomacy given our political process," said Richard Haass, a national security aide in former president George Bush's White House. "There is a need at times not only to be doing things, but to be seen as doing things."

This time, public U.S. appeals led to public rejections.

The latest came Monday in New York, where U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen held a news conference after a two-hour meeting.

"We feel no nation ought to go forward with nuclear cooperation with Iran.... It is too dangerous to do so," Mr. Christopher said, knowing what Mr. Qian's response would be.

"There is no international law or international regulation or international agreement that prohibits such cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy," the Chinese foreign minister said.

Mr. Christopher fared no better when he met in Geneva last month with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev.

"We don't see any problem here," Mr. Kozyrev said, after Mr. Christopher told a joint news conference that Iran's nuclear ambitions were "among the gravest" problems the United States and Russia must resolve.

"Our cooperation with Iran is fully within the purview of the Non-Proliferation Treaty," the Russian minister said.

Both occasions followed a pattern set early in the Clinton administration as it struggled to deal with ethnic warfare in Bosnia and human rights abuses in China.

Declaring that "the Serbs know that they have exhausted the patience of the international community," Mr. Christopher flew to Europe in May 1993, presumably to get allied support for lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims and using air strikes against the Serbs.

His mission was disastrous, a public failure. In capital after capital, the answer was no.

A year ago he went to China and said he would tell the government in Beijing that if its human rights record didn't improve, there was little chance the administration would renew its trade preferences.

The Chinese responded by arresting dissidents, and when the June deadline arrived, President Clinton renewed China's most-favoured-nation status and said it was time to separate trade and human rights.

Could all this have transpired in less public forums?

"It's not enough for the United States to stand up and shout that these countries (Iran, Iraq, North Korea) are big threats and we need to embargo them," Mr. Haass said.

LETTERS

Labels to hurt

To the Editor:

THE SUCCESS of the Zionist media campaign to demonise the Arab World and Islam has been exposed. In less than two hours after the Oklahoma bombing there were reports of Mideast connection, and the "profile" was being advanced.

As an Arab-American attorney who practises in the U.S., and former legal director of the Arab Community Centre in Detroit, Michigan, I can clearly predict what was going on.

As the largest Arab community outside the Mideast, when an incident like the Oklahoma bombing occurs, we are faced with news media setting up cameras around our mosques, coffee houses and schools to give their viewers "insight" of the others that live with them.

Acts of violence against Arabs and Muslims always rise after any internal problem i.e. World Trade Centre and Desert Storm. Despite the many harassment cases against these groups, very few cases are reported out of fear that they could incite others to commit more.

On the day of the Oklahoma bombing, Israeli television news interviewed the producer of the Zionist movie "Jehad in America" who spoke of the hotbed of Islam in Oklahoma, and showed a clip of young men dancing at a wedding. This attempt to demonise Arabs and Islam cannot be thought of as isolated incidents.

With the progress in the peace process, one should avoid stirring more hatred into the air, and do as President Bill Clinton has done and urged others not to use this tragedy to fan the flames of hatred towards Arabs and Muslims in America.

Mosabi Hamed,
Amman.

More trees, less cement

To the Editor:

AMMAN IS a unique city — because of its people, its architecture and its environment. Over the past 30 years, I have watched beige buildings, rather than green trees spread across the hills and valleys of greater Amman.

Today, local architects and engineers, want to build another cement public area, like King Abdullah Gardens in Ras El Ain, between Al Misdar and the Wadi Abdoun tobacco factory. As I look out my window at the sprawling Amman skyline, I know what Amman needs: More trees and less cement.

Why not create a park in our city centre; a "lung" for Amman, like Central Park in New York City, or Hyde Park in London? These parks are lovely communal areas that generate crucial oxygen supplies for their surrounding ecosystems. Transforming Ras El Ain into a real garden rather than a cement one is a chance to improve our city's environment for generations to come.

Hazem Malhas
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Corrupting a continent

The ancient Greeks invented democracy; the English created the first parliament. For centuries, enlightened Europeans have struggled towards accountable, open government. Yet today, Europe's bodies politic are mired in scandal and greed. **Mark Frankland** asks why.

ALMOST TWO-thirds of the French think most of their politicians are corrupt, according to an opinion poll published in Paris last week, and the overwhelming majority do not believe politics to be an honourable occupation.

These findings will not surprise anyone who has been reading recent French headlines. Over the past year three ministers in Edouard Balladur's government have resigned and are now awaiting trial, or are under investigation on suspicion of corruption. Two well-known mayors — of Lyons and Nice — are on trial on charges of using their office to enrich themselves. A third — in Angoulême — has already been found guilty.

The classic pattern of local politicians accepting bribes for profitable building and services contracts has provided a fame-winning battlefield for young investigating judges, such as 43-year-old Renaud van Ruymbeke in Rennes. Eric Halphen, who is only 35, is pushing ahead with an inquiry into local government near Paris involving Mr. Balladur's Gaullist party, in the face of opposition from the pugnacious Interior Minister Charles Pasqua.

To this rich stew, the misadventures of Bernard Tapie, owner of the football team Olympic Marseilles, merely add spice. A former Socialist minister, not long ago blessed from his Olympian heights by President Francois Mitterrand, Mr. Tapie has been tried for match-rigging and is awaiting the verdict.

Is there not something familiar in these dirty stories from France? Indeed there is. Much of what we are inclined to think of as the real Europe, meaning the rich nations of the West and North as opposed to the impecunious East, can match these French reports. Indeed, British public anguish about MPs who take cash for asking questions seems small beer compared with some of the horror stories abounding across the water. Investigations have even reached NATO's secretary-general, the former Belgian foreign minister, Willy Claes, whose official residence was searched by police earlier this month.

Belgium is used to scandals. Ten years ago the former prime minister, Paul Van den Boynants, was given a three-year suspended sentence for forgery and fiscal fraud. Local government has been most shameless in the French-speaking city of Liege, where mayor Edouard Close was only the most senior official to be jailed for taking money in exchange for city contracts. An ex-mayor of Brussels is openly referred to in the Belgian press as Mr. Ten Per Cent.

But it is the ramifications of Belgium's purchase of 46 army helicopters from the Italian firm Agusta that now threaten Mr. Claes and puts other scandals in the shade. It has already led to the gangland killing of a former vice-premier and the suicide of an admired general and is felling politicians right and left, among them the recently resigned Belgian foreign minister Frank Van den Broucke.

The nub of the Agusta affair is that the Italian firm, to secure the deal in the face of German and French competition, allegedly paid £1 million to the Flemish Socialist party (to which Mr. Claes and Mr. Van den Broucke belong) and £300,000 to the separate French-speaking Socialists.

Greedy ruling parties are common elsewhere in Europe. The Spanish Socialists, for example, burnt their fingers badly in the Filesa affair, in which businesses 'bought' reports from phantom research companies, the money going into party coffers. Filesa resembles Belgium's Inusop affair, now before the courts, in which inflated bills for sometimes non-existent reports by a market research institute affiliated to Brussels university, brought money to the ever-needy French-speaking Socialists.

If the 13-year-old government of the Spanish Premier, Felipe González, is defeated at the next elections, its string of scandals will be the main reason. Spaniards are tired of learning that local governments regularly rake in commissions on contracts, or that such a prominent official as Luis Roldán is alleged to have done the same on contracts for Civil Guards barracks.

None of these cases is one of Eurofraud, the manipulation of European Union (EU) rules to get undeserved subsidies and payments from Brussels. Last year, Eurofraud took £800 million from the EU budget. But even this is not as serious as the steady damage to national psyches from scandals suggesting most politician and officials are corrupt.

In democracies, Alexis de Tocqueville noted 150 years ago, there is always a tendency to explain a politician's rise to power by his misdeeds rather than his ability. "In this way there comes about an odious mingling of the conceptions of baseness and power, of unworthiness and success, and of profit and dishonour."

If this process continues long enough, people regard their government as irredeemably alien — the reverse of the democratic ideal. In extreme cases the result may be revolution, or the choice of a populist leader who exploits public disgust to fuel his own bid for power.

The increasing awareness of corruption in European public life has two explanations: either there is more corruption, or more of it is being brought to light.

In fact, both explanations apply. Italy provided proof of increased corruption with a train of arrests of industrialists that began in Milan in 1992. In jail many of the businessmen talked, blaming extortion by politicians.

They knew corruption was growing: an average 7 per cent kickback fee in the seventies had grown to 20 per cent in the greedy eighties. They knew this extra cost was hurting their competiveness against European rivals. And they did not like the future they saw for their children. "I don't want my son taking over my company," a Turin industrialist said." He's not tough enough to go to jail. Here you can't work unless you pay kickbacks, and that means to everyone, including the Communists and the Carabinieri (the paramilitary police). I am at risk every day."

If Italy is a case of corruption reaching crisis proportions, France is an example of corruption seeming to grow partly because of a new determination to uncover it. The French press, brilliant in analysis, has been little better at domestic muckraking than its Italian counterpart. But in 1990 France's investigating judges were infuriated when the National Assembly passed a retroactive amnesty for politicians who received illegal donations for their parties.

The result, according to Antoine Garapon of the Institute of Higher Judicial Studies in Paris, was a "judicial revolt" of which French politicians are still feeling the force.

Though Germany has provided fewer international headlines, no country provides better evidence of growing corruption. In a recent issue with a cover story entitled "Slush-money Republic Germany," the news magazine Spiegel concluded: "Even in the land of the uncorruptible civil servant, scarcely noticed by the public, the principle of assistance (kickbacks) has spread like an epidemic."

In 1988 there were 361 cases of official corruption in Frankfurt, Germany's financial centre. Last year there were 1,498. When 60 German police commissioners met in Berlin last month to talk about corruption, the local state prosecutor greeted them with the news that a city official had been selling driving licences for up to £2,000 each. Hans-Ludwig Zachert, head of the Federal Criminal Investigation Office, seemed to agree with Spiegel: "Obviously we in Germany have never been as immune to corruption as we have persuaded ourselves."

Where has Europe gone wrong? Most countries fall between the extremes of Scandinavia and Greece. In Greece, a system of patrons and clients going back to the Ottoman empire permeates all life. The powerful patron provides favours; the grateful client gifts. And as long as the state remains the biggest employer, but pays civil servants very little, there is small chance the country will be drawn up to supposedly higher European standards.

Might Europe be dragged down to Balkan habits? Certainly Scandinavians, studying reports from France and Spain, could be excused for fearing that EU membership will corrupt them. Nordic government is remarkably transparent. Even ministers' tax returns and the prime minister's correspondence are open to citizens' inspection. Civil servants have a legal right to leak information to the press. An egalitarian and puritan culture, underpinned by years of Social Democratic government, can be a hostile environment even for legal fortune-making. "Any kind of opulent lifestyle breeds suspicion," says Stockholm University professor Rune Premfors.

Barbro Hedvall, leader writer of Expressen, Sweden's biggest newspaper, thinks Swedes have "an inherited attitude that makes it immoral to offer people money to get first place in the queue."

Much of west Europe, though, has come under several baleful influences. The first was the cold war, used to justify too much that was illicit. In Italy the CIA covertly supported Italian Christian and Social Democrats to stop a takeover by the Communists, who in turn got money from Moscow. The Communist threat also seemed to justify Christian Democrat deals with the Mafia, leading to a symbiosis of crime and supposedly Christian governance.

The Agusta affair has revealed how the arms trade between European allies, also hallowed by the cold war, leads to corruption. The big European arms manufacturers routinely pay "commissions" to win contracts: in France it is officially accepted these may be worth 15 per cent of a deal. There is some justice in the way this has come to trouble the headquarters of NATO itself.

The Agusta deal happened because Belgian political parties needed money for impossibly expensive television campaigning. This happened throughout Europe, and led to the Flick scandal in Germany involving the three major parties. France, Belgium and Spain have all brought in new legislation on party funding, but as long as the need for money exists, the temptation to take illegal contributions remains.

Last, there is the "Thatcher" effect, a combination of economic boom, privatisation and the acceptance of self-enrichment as an almost moral imperative. In some countries, notably France, this was encouraged by decentralisation of local government in the early eighties. Frankfurt's chief prosecutor believes growing corruption there can be explained by local, modestly paid, officials making decisions about contracts whose "size has been rising steadily for the past five years — sometimes to dizzying heights."

Even Scandinavians worry about tension between their high tax systems and the money-making temptations in the rest of Europe. Last week the head of Sweden's Roads Board resigned for using public funds to build a villa. Rare exception or straw in the wind?

The bad news from Italy is that magistrates who led the clean-up campaign are being sidelined. Last December, Antonio Di Pietro, who started Operation Clean Hands, became so engraged by cover attempts to frustrate him that he tore off his black robe in court and resigned. He has been violently criticised in media owned by Italy's former president, Silvio Berlusconi, who now faces his own corruption inquiry. Equally sinister is the collapse of parliament's anti-Mafia commission examining links between politicians and organised crime.

The odds are some corrupt Italian politicians will recycle themselves back into public life. Whether people throw their hands up in despair or take it as cause to continue the fight depends on their attitude to public morality. "The French conception of public life," suggests Garapon, "is at the same time monarchic and clerical. Our leaders are supposed to be powerful and good." If they prove to be neither, the temptation, French history suggests, is to have a revolution or look for another supposedly great leader.

But there is another tradition, most eloquently outlined by the authors of the American constitution, who believed all powerful men, even a president, could be corrupted, and that it was necessary to keep them under observation and control. The point of constitutional checks and balances, explained the early U.S. statesman James Madison, was that "ambition must be made to counteract ambition." This, he argued, was not cynicism, but realism. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."

In France and Italy it has been the magistrates and judges who have reminded their compatriots of the non-angelic nature of humankind; in Spain, where the free press is much more probing, journalists have played an important part. It should not be a cause for despair — or drastic solutions — that this battle, is, and always had been, endless.

Contributions from Dick Leonard, Brussels; Greg McIvor, Stockholm; Adam Sage, Paris; Fränke Smith, Madrid; Helena Smith, Athens; Denis Staunton, Berlin; David Willey, Rome. The above article is reprinted from the Observer.

King visits aircraft carrier

(Continued from page 1)

monarch, King Hussein said: "I do not suppose it does differ much (from the U.S. president's work). I am proud to serve the people of Jordan and the people of the region and the same ideals and principles as of those of the United States.

"We belong to the camp of freedom. We believe in democracy, pluralism, respect of human rights, which are a fact of life in our country, and giving the Jordanians a chance to shape their future. As far as my responsibilities are concerned, certainly, after the passage of those many years, it is really good to be there to act as a dynamo so to speak. The government runs a country. Parliament is the real authority to which the government is responsible and any government in Jordan. I try to help and advise sometimes. Maybe the fact that I have nothing of interest except the good of the country, the good of the area and I am not involved at any other level in terms of different factions or views of political parties in the country.

"It gives me the ability to serve and to advise in many respects and most important of all ... to live up to the aspirations, and, at this stage, the peace which has been a dream which we hope future generations will enjoy."

On relations with the United States, the King said:

"The relations were always very very close and very special. As far as I am concerned, the first president of the United States I had the privilege of meeting was Dwight Eisenhower, and I have met with all U.S. presidents with the exception of President Kennedy.

"We were friends and allies ... that was our relationship through the years of the cold war, the difficult years when in our part of the world there were a very few able to raise their voice and to be proud. That was between us and the United States in the free world.

"I believe it is a partnership in terms of the future. We appreciate the leadership role the U.S. plays and we hope our relations will always be based on mutual respect and a desire to be partners and friends in creating that future in this entire region."

The King later watched an exercise of planes taking off and landing on board the ship and he participated in one of the exercises.

Oklahoma rescue continues

(Continued from page 1)

The only advantage the cooler weather brings is that it slows the decay of the remaining bodies, the state medical examiners office said.

Search teams were concentrating on the basement of the destroyed building, where they fear many bodies are still to be found.

Rescuers, many who were using heat-seeking equipment and body-sniffing dogs, clung to hopes that survivours still might be found in pockets of the collapsed building.

Armed military police kept all but clergy and relatives from approaching a nearby church, where relatives kept a vigil. Occasionally, relatives would come out to speak with reporters gathered nearby and to display photographs of the missing.

One man displayed a snapshot of his five-year-old daughter and two-year-old son and asked that they be remembered "no matter what condition they are in when they are found."

A day care centre was located on the second floor of the federal building and authorities say it is buried under the rubble of the roof and seven floors that were above it.

So far 12 children were found dead in the rubble. The owner of the day care centre, Melva Nokes, said as many as 24 children may have been in the centre that day, but no accurate count could be made because sometimes people would drop off their children for safekeeping without prior notice.

Peres to attend Amman meeting

(Continued from page 1)

specific projects that do not need much of feasibility studies and lengthy procedures and financing arrangements for these projects," said an official involved in the preparations for the symposium.

"The groundwork for the meeting was laid in the meetings held in Amman in March and April," said the official, who preferred anonymity.

"Those meetings brought out key elements that are of relevance to financing arrangements for the projects. Hopefully, the ideas could be further developed for detailed and focused studies by the various parties concerned at this week's meeting," added the official.

The Amman symposium is part of activities to be hosted by Jordan ahead of the North Africa and Middle East summit to be held in Amman in October.

Several other workshops and seminars grouping Jordanian, Israeli and American as well as European, Japanese and other officials and businessmen will be held before the summit so that definite and clear projects could be presented at the conference, officials say.

Dispute over voting in NPT talks

(Continued from page 1)

lear disarmament, but doubts they will agree on the question of the duration of the treaty's extension.

In addition to the indefinite and unconditional extension sought by the West, NPT delegates are considering whether to extend the treaty for a fixed single period or for a series of periods.

The United States, Britain and France — three of the five declared nuclear weapons powers — declared their support for indefinite extension.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was expected to do the same Monday.

China, the fifth nuclear power, cautiously said Tuesday it would vote for indefinite extension or fixed periods.

Holy fire and riots on Easter

(Continued from page 1)

in the two oval cavities on either side of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of the tomb of Jesus according to Christian tradition.

Shmuel Ben-Ruby, spokesman for the Jerusalem police force, said this was the first time violence had erupted during the annual ceremony.

No one was arrested or ushered out of the compound, he said.

"We will not start making arrests or using force during a religious ceremony of such importance," he added.

Inside the 12th century basilica, elderly Greek women and young nuns pushed toward the chapel. Pilgrims, tourists and indigenous Arab Christians filled the dark and cavernous church.

هكذا من الأصل

Arabs boost fertilizer capacity to face Asian growth

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are setting up new fertilizer plants and expanding existing units to benefit from higher prices and face growing demand in China and other Asian countries.

Expansion projects were announced at an Arab conference in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) this week to discuss supply, demand and coordination in marketing and technology among regional producers.

Officials said new projects and expansion of existing plants would push up the total Arab fertilizer output capacity by more than 40 per cent in the year 2000 from its present level of around 20 million tonnes.

"Most of the projects will produce nitrogenic fertilizers, especially ammonia and urea, given the rapid growth in demand for these substances," said Yussuf Al Nuweis, general manager of the UAE fertilizer company Fertil.

"The expansions were prompted by a sharp increase in prices over the past few years and rapid growth in local consumption and demand in China and India," he pointed out.

Fertil itself has plans to raise its production of urea and ammonia by nearly 100,000 tonnes per year although it has been producing above its designed capacity.

The company's current output is estimated at more than 800,000 tonnes per year, most of which are exported to China and India.

Qatar, already a key Arab producer of fertilizers, announced plans to build a new plant to produce 730,000 tonnes of urea per year and nearly 550,000 tonnes of ammonia at a cost of around $540 million.

The project was revealed by director of the state-run Qatari Fertilizers Company (Qafco), Ali Fakhru, who said the contract had already been awarded to a German firm.

He said the project would boost Qatar's production of urea to around 1.46 million tonnes per year and of ammonia to 1.2 million tonnes.

"The project will enable us to meet the increasing needs of our clients," he told the conference, adding the bulk of Qafco's output is exported to China, India, South East Asia, Australia and the United States.

Expansion projects were also announced by the Bahraini Gulf Petrochemical Corporation, Libya's Sirt and companies from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

Delegates said the expansion in urea and ammonia production would enable Arab states to exploit their enormous gas reserves which had been neglected because most regional countries were engaged in developing their oil sector.

Official figures showed Arab proven gas reserves stood at around 29.5 trillion cubic metres (983.3 trillion cubic feet), accounting for nearly 20.7 per cent of the world's total natural gas reserves.

Stock markets surge as dollar holds

LONDON (R) — Stock markets ended the week with a buying surge Friday as a more stable dollar boosted investor confidence on both sides of the Atlantic.

Paris, London and Frankfurt all saw strong buying interest, with the French market jumping 2.46 per cent while New York rose to yet another record level with a 20-point morning gain.

The rise in Paris was put down to precautionary short covering ahead of Sunday's vote in the two-stage presidential election. U.S. buyers have been moving the French market higher recently, and dealers also cited firmer bonds, a steady franc and Euro Disney's lower than expected first-half loss.

The dollar extended its rally though it ran into resistance at 1.39 marks and 84 yen with activity dampened by uncertainty tied to Tuesday's Group of Seven (G-7) talks in Washington.

Further gains could not be ruled out at the dollar's sharp rebound from its all-time low of 79.95 yen on Wednesday caught many traders by surprise, but analysts did not think the rally was built on solid fundamentals.

"If the dollar cracks the 84.10 level then a test of 85 could be possible," said Peter Heath, senior trader at Kansallis Osake Pankki in London. "With the G-7 coming up it should be supported but once that's out of the way we will see lower levels again."

Few believe the industrialised nations will agree on a concerted policy to support the dollar. There is strong pressure on the G-7 however, to show they are taking a grip on a situation that threatens to erode confidence if the dollar continues to sink while the yen and mark just keep on rising. Germany and Japan have voiced strong criticisms of U.S. policy in recent days.

European markets rose not only on the stronger dollar but also on the feeling that Wall Street's rise must be sending a buying message and that recent slides have injected value into many blue-chip shares.

In London the FTSE 100 pushed ahead 0.8 per cent but just failed to hold the 3,200 level. A fall in retail sales figures for March confirmed that Britain's economy is slowing and raised hopes that interest rate rises can be delayed.

German shares also took heart from the dollar's better showing against the mark, which should make life easier for exporting firms. The DAX-30 rose 1.06 per cent and then added another 11 points in post-bourse dealings.

Daimler-Benz, under pressure from dollar weakness in recent weeks, made good some losses to close 11 marks higher at 621. That buoyed other carmakers, with BMW A.G. closing eight marks higher at 697 and Volkswagen up 2.50 marks at 366.30.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY APRIL 23, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Inviting relative and close friends into your home is best today, enjoy them. Study your home and see where to make little changes.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Especially on this day, it is a good time to think about how to have greater abundance for later tonight.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Look about you and see what you want to retain today and what should be discarded in your abode. Get that streamlined look.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Concentrate on those changes you want to make in your life today which will make it more as you wish it to be.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Early today plan activities which can make you feel more contented and happy for tasks completed tonight. Get together with good friends.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Clarify your wishes and go after them so that later tonight looms brighter for you. Stop wasting your time with the angry or dull.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can handle any civic or government affairs very well today, so get right at them and you can feel happy with your loved ones.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Today is a good day to consult with a wise person who has a fine philosophy of life and which you would like to adopt so that you find peace.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You may have business to attend today which is important, so don't neglect it. Come to a fine understanding with your mate.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Study your partnership well and improve one in particular today which seems to be on shaky ground and needs improvement.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Stick to the tasks you have taken on today and later on tonight study the over-all picture well and become more enthused.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Know what it is which those who dwell with you desire in your relationship, and then come to a better understanding.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

FORECAST FOR MONDAY APRIL 24, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Go over your accounts and handle them wisely so that you increase your good will today and impress others favourably.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Early today get your health built up via right-treatments; and improve your appearance. Await a better day to see others.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Some private affair requires can and precision in order to handle it well, otherwise you get deeper into trouble.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't involve yourself today into some altercation between a fellow associate and an outsider or you could become the centre of a problem.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You have decided whether to handle regular routines or go off to something new, but if you plan, you can handle both.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be sure to handle any tasks which are necessary this morning before you go out for a good time tonight with friends. Indulge only what is not too costly.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An associate and a family tie do not agree on something, but keep out of it and soon everything will be alright.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Forget about making all those visits you have in mind to see friends today and get your tasks handled more efficiently.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You have fine creative ideas which can be developed, so get right to them. Take time today for recreational activities with close friends.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your desires may be quite different to those of your loved ones, so live and let live, for best results. Handle business affairs wisely and with great efficiency.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Forget that private worry and get out into the business world to accomplish a great deal today. Enjoy some cultural activity with your loved one.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Think about adding to your financial situation and avoid going out to places of amusement which can most expensive today.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Subroto: Oil shortages possible by 2000

JAKARTA (AFP) — A former chief of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has warned that world oil demand could exceed supply by the turn of the century, media reports said here Friday.

Dr. Subroto, former OPEC secretary general, predicted demand would probably increase to 72 million barrels per day (b/d) by 2000 from the current level of 66 million b/d.

"The demand will likely increase further to 80 million b/d by 2010," Dr. Subroto was quoted by the Jakarta Post daily as telling a business conference.

Dr. Subroto said non-OPEC countries supply 40 million b/d to the world's oil market, while OPEC countries provide 25 million b/d.

OPEC groups Algeria, Gabon, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.

Dr. Subroto forecasted that oil production from non-OPEC countries is projected to remain at 40 million b/p, or even to decrease by 2010.

Oil production from the United States and Russia — two of the world's largest producers outside of OPEC — has been decreasing substantially. Increased production from non-OPEC countries is expected from Columbia, Argentina, Brazil, Yemen, Syria and Vietnam.

Looking at estimated oil demand of 72 million b/d by 2000, at the capability of non-OPEC countries to produce 40 million b/d, OPEC will have to make up the difference, he said.

Wary response seen to Japan's currency review call

TOKYO (R) — The yen's stunning rise is prompting Japan to press for a review of the global currency order, which critics say breeds turmoil and threatens crisis.

But chances of real reform soon look slim.

"Japan does not have a concrete idea to propose, and even if it had one, it lacks the international power or influence to persuade other nations," said economics Professor Shoichi Royama, a frequent member of government advisory panels.

Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura told a news conference Friday that the Group of Seven (G-7) nations would discuss ways to improve the system, including target zones for currency rates, when they meet in Washington this week.

"Unfortunately, at the moment there's no concensus among the major nations on how to improve the system," he added.

French Economy Minister Edmond Alphandery has urged the G-7 to discuss ways to stabilise exchange rates along the lines of the Plaza agreement of 1985 and the Louvre accord of 1987.

And Canada has put currency market review at the top of the agenda for the (G-7) summit it will host in June.

Nearly a year ago, the independent Bretton Woods Commission said countries should establish a more formal system of coordination to help avoid excessive exchange rate misalignments which have led to volatility.

The panel took its name from the 1994 Bretton Woods conference, which set the gold standard at $35 an ounce and made the dollar the cornerstone of the world currency exchange.

The system collapsed in 1971 and was replaced two years later by the present system of floating exchange rates.

Some economists agree the dollar's 20 per cent plunge against the yen this year suggests the time is ripe to rethink the floating rate system.

"Academically... the debate has swung to the viewpoint that exchange rate volatility in the 1980s and 1990s was so high that it created inefficiencies and something should be done," said economist Richard Werner at Jardine Fleming in Tokyo.

"The aim is to level more in line with fundamentals and to avoid currency crises," Mr. Werner said.

but of the world's three biggest economic powers Japan, Germany and the United States, only Japan now openly advocates review. "Japan is very much in favour, America is half-hearted, and Germany is not so far convinced," Mr. Werner said.

Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer Thursday gave a thumbs-down to the target zone notion, saying neither exchange rate targets nor intervention would help if nations failed to gain the market's confidence with credible policies.

Some wonder whether Japan is serious about currency reform or merely venting frustration over its inability to halt the yen's climb and America's unwillingness to defend the dollar.

"Less than a year ago, when the Bretton Woods Commission made a statement, (vice finance minister Kosuke) Nakahira laughed at it," said Keikichi Honda, economic adviser to the Bank of Tokyo. "Why say it now? it's a long, long way to introduce anything like a stable system."

Some who favour reviewing the current system say now is not the time to try to introduce fixed zones or targets.

"It would be a good idea to study target or reference zones, but it is neither feasible nor desirable to introduce them soon," said former vice finance minister Tomomitsu Oba.

Others say obstacles to creating a system of target zones for world currencies may ultimately be insurmountable.

Morocco says privatisation receipts rose 330 per cent

CASABLANCA (R) — Morocco's privatisation receipts since January have reached 1.29 billion dirhams ($155 million), a rise of 330 per cent compared with 300 million dirhams ($36.1 million) in the same period of 1994, officials said.

Presenting the sale results of state stakes in Banque Marocaine du Commerce Exterieur (BMCE), Privatisation Minister Abdul Rahman Saaidi said Friday: "The privatisation programme is spending up. Its receipts are higher compared with the privatisation receipts in France, Switzerland and England."

Mr. Saaidi, who held a news conference on Friday at BMCE's headquarters in Casablanca, said that among other enterprises due to be privatised soon was the holding Banque Nationale de Development Economique (BNDE).

Casablanca stockbrokers said the authorities have ceded in the first four months of the year stakes in BMCE, General Tire and Rubber Company of Morocco and sold two hotels.

Morocco sold 26 per cent of its holding in BMCE, one of Morocco's leading banks, at 1.24 billion dirhams ($150 million).

"It was a successful operation," Mr. Saaidi said.

The government sold 2.6 million shares at 478 dirhams ($57) a share, the ministry said. On the Casablanca bourse BMCE's shares were traded at 381 dirhams each Friday, or up by seven per cent since last week.

Last January, subscriptions for BMCE's 1.4 million shares at 325 dirhams each were oversubscribed six times.

Output soars in China's rural firms

BEIJING (AFP) — China's rural enterprises saw first quarter output jump 29 per cent over the same period last year, but severe capital shortages emerged as a major threat to development, a report said Friday.

The impressive output growth brought production value from January to March up to 1.560 billion yuan ($185.7 billion), but was still much slower than the 1994 first quarter rise of 47 per cent, the China Daily quoted Ji Cai, of the ministry of agriculture's Township Enterprise Bureau, as saying.

While attributing the slowdown in part to efforts to shift development emphasis from high growth rates to efficiency, Mr. Ji acknowledged that rural firms had been badly hit by the government's moves to cool the economy by restricting bank credit.

"Many problems are plaguing China's rural firms, such as a serious lack of capital, rising loan interest rates, higher taxes and levies, and increasing costs of raw materials, energy and transportation," he said.

By the end of 1994, some 120 million former farmers were employed in rural firms, which include collective and share-holding township and village enterprises in which local authorities have a stake as well as private businesses.

These firms have mushroomed under China's economic reforms during the past 15 years, greatly outperforming lumbering state enterprises to account for an ever-larger slice of the country's output.

Last year, they accounted for 30 per cent of national gross domestic production value and some 50 per cent of industrial output value, the China Daily said.

Chinese Premier Li Peng, in his speech to parliament last month, underlined the importance of their continued rapid development to efforts aimed at ensuring stability in the long-neglected countryside, home to four-fifths of China's population of 1.2 billion.

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"I didn't have enough energy to finish my dream...so I went out for a snack."

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HAIKK

TIFAN

KEBORN

CLOTEK

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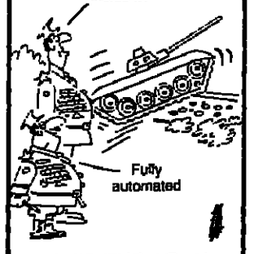


WHAT THE ARMY BRASS CALLED THE RESEARCH VEHICLE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

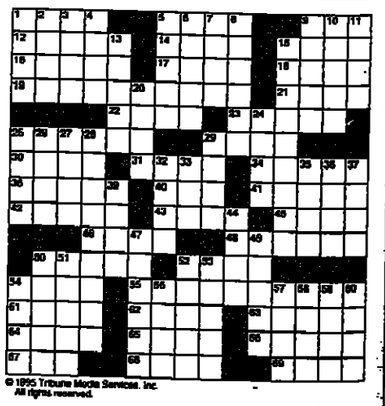
Answer here: A " " (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: TWEAK BEIGE MADMAN GROTTO

Answer: What the customers considered the friendly butcher shop — A "MEET" MARKET

THE Daily Crossword

by James L. Beatty



ACROSS
1 Polka —
5 Bark cloth
9 Fashionable resort
12 Wrath
14 Experts
15 Inheritor
16 Oregon's capital
17 Ilk
18 "Madam, I'm —"
19 Go — (bug off!)
21 Sunbathes
22 "East of —"
23 Moola in Manchester
25 Speakers' platforms
29 Shortly
30 Nevada town
31 "Showboat" composer
34 Abrupt
38 Type size
40 Tub
41 Mammal with a proboscis
42 Walkways
43 Heroic
45 Defense org.
46 List extender
48 Confused
50 Viper
52 Abstract being
54 Actor Mostel
55 Go — (be ruined)
61 Atwitter
62 Honolulu's island
63 Ornamental fossil resin
64 Pinches
65 — Bator
66 Kind of race
67 Female suffix
68 Little one of the litter
69 Beauty and Buntline

DOWN
1 Phono record
2 Spoken
3 Anklebones
4 Check
5 Savor
6 Kind of squash
7 Pierre's papa
8 Behind a vessel
9 City on the Meuse
10 Soft, in music
11 Weapons
13 Live coal
15 Go — (approach humbly)
20 Aleutian isle
24 Multitude
25 Harvest
26 Gymnast Korbut
27 Card game
28 Go — (degenerate)
29 One opposed
32 — Knievel
33 Legal sentence
35 Girasol
36 — of passage
37 Walked on
39 Italian princely family
44 Instance
47 Leafy bower in Leeds
49 Exclude
50 Protection
51 Tear and lemon
52 Frome or Allen
53 Shove aside
54 Author Grey
56 Chinese river
57 Portent
58 Proficient
59 Peruse
60 Volstead followers

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Puzzle solved:

A	M	I	S		S	A	L	E	M		S	L	E	D
R	E	S	T		A	M	A	T	I		T	O	R	A
G	R	E	A	T	L	A	K	E	S		R	I	M	E
O	V	E	R	S	I	Z	E		S	E	E	S	A	W
				A	N	E		R	I	O	A			
A	S	P	I	R	E		L	A	L	A	K	E	N	S
T	A	R	T	S		T	O	N	E	D		M	A	G
A	M	A	S		T	W	I	G	S		A	C	T	A
L	O	R		S	H	A	R	E		S	T	E	E	L
L	A	K	E	E	R	I	E		S	P	E	E	D	Y
			R	A	I	N		C	H	I				
T	H	R	A	L	L		I	R	O	N	I	C	A	L
B	O	O	S		L	A	K	E	O	S	W	E	G	O
A	N	T	E		E	L	E	M	I		A	R	I	A
R	E	E	D		R	I	S	E	N		S	O	O	N

IATA chief sees boom ahead for civil aviation industry

GENEVA (R) — The International Air Transport Association (IATA), celebrating its 50th anniversary, has predicted huge growth generating many more jobs in the civil aviation industry over the next decade.

IATA also said it was probable figures to be issued this week would confirm its 230 member airlines in 135 countries in 1994 collectively made their first profit — around $1 billion — in five years of recession and gradual recovery.

In a speech in Havana, Director-General Pierre Jeanniot said IATA companies carried 1,200 million passengers on all services last year — equivalent to one in five of the world's population — and about 19 million tonnes of freight.

"Of the 337 million international scheduled passengers, 333 million travelled on IATA airlines, which also carried 11.2 million tonnes of freight," Mr. Jeanniot told a special 50th anniversary ceremony.

"And the best is yet to come — most of the absolute numbers are expected to double over the next 10 years," he declared.

IATA was founded in Havana on April 19, 1945, at a meeting of 57 airlines from 31 countries and replaced the old International Air Traffic Association which had steered the then fledgling industry through rapid growth between two world wars.

Working to promote easier and safer air travel and freight movement, the Montreal and Geneva-based body has now gathered under its wing companies operating some 98 per cent of international flights.

Although the years since World War II have seen a vast surge in air travel, the industry was badly hit by the recession which began at the end of the 1980s and between 1990 and 1993 IATA airlines made a total loss of $15.6 billion.

But an IATA spokesman in Geneva said earlier forecasts that 1994 will have marked a turnaround were likely to be confirmed when financial figures for last year are issued on April 24 when Mr. Jeanniot speaks to a conference in New York.

"The figure of $1 billion profits now looks probable rather than just possible," the spokesman said.

Preliminary figures already released by IATA showed an eight per cent increase in international passenger traffic and 11 per cent in cargo carried by member airlines last year.

In his Havana speech, he recalled that in 1945 only nine million people — against the 1,200 million of 1994 — and a few thousand tonnes of freight travelled by air.

In tonnage, he said, the 11.2 millions of freight moved on international flights in 1994 was only about five per cent of the world total, but in terms of value it was more than a quarter of the total of goods traded internationally.

The total civil aviation-related industry, including tourism linked to and encouraged by air travel, now provided at least 22 million jobs for the world's workforce and $1,000 billion in gross output, the former chief of Air Canada declared.

Civil aviation, he said, was at the heart of the travel and tourism sector of the global economy which was now the world's largest industry and supported 204 million jobs.

Saudi shipping firm expands Asia operations

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's biggest shipping firm is planning to open new lines in China and Turkey as part of expansion projects which include purchase of new vessels, the company has said.

The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA) said it would start services to China's Tianjin port in May after launching operations at Shanghai port late last year, the first Arab shipping firm to reach China.

"The Tianjin line will provide traders with a new link to the northern parts of China, including interior markets around Beijing," said Hussein Al Maktum, deputy director of NSCSA's lines and information technology.

"The Tianjin and Shanghai lines as well as the Hong Kong service also mean that traders can now directly reach north, central and southern China," he said in a statement sent to AFP from the company's headquarters in Riyadh.

NSCSA, the second biggest petrochemical shipper in the world, has been involved in expansion plans to boost services and buy more ships. They include the purchase of five supertankers with a capacity of more than two million barrels at a cost of $400-$480 million.

The Saudi government owns around 29 per cent of NSCSA, which has a capital of two billion riyals ($533 million) and a fleet of 26 large vessels.

The statement said the new lines would link China with the Middle East and North America and it was the only world shipping firm to serve Tianjin.

It said the expansions in China followed its growing trade with the Middle East and the United States and "reflected the developing friendly relations between the Chinese and the Gulf and other Arab states."

The line to Turkey would link its western port of Izmir with the United States and would enable NSCSA to transport exports from the Far East, South East Asia and the Middle East to Turkey and Turkish exports to the U.S., the statement said.

"With such lines, NSCSA has completed implementation of its expansion plan in the short run and it would start carrying out its medium and long term plans in the second half of 1995," Mr. Maktum said.

Time-Warner posts $47m loss

NEW YORK (AFP) — U.S. media group Time-Warner has announced it had a net loss of $47 million or 13 cents per share, in the first three months of this year. The loss was larger then analysts had anticipated, but marked an improvment on the $51 million net loss, or 14 cents per share, for the same period last year.

The group's turnover rose 17 per cent to $1.82 billion, compared to $1.56 billion for the first quarter last year.

Time-Warner's operating income also rose 23 per cent to $138 million, against $112 million last year, but fell short of the group's interest repayments of $155 million.

Time Warner Entertainment (TWE), a limited partnership holding the group's interests in film and cable television, posted a 73 per cent decline in net profits to $11 million, compared to $41 million last year. TWE's turnover rose to $2.07 billion, against $1.93 billion for the same period in 1994. TWE's figures were consolidated in the group's overall results for the first quarter.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 20/4/1995	Tokyo Close Date 21/4/1995
Sterling Pound	1,6090	1,6127
Deutsche Mark	1,3849	1,3701
Swiss Franc	1,1435	1,1305
French Franc	4,9015	4,8678
Japanese Yen	83,23	82,70
European Currency Unit	1,3990	1,3403

* Unit Per [illegible]
European Opening is 9,00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 21/4/1995

Currency	1 MTHS	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5,87	5,93	6,12	6,31
Sterling Pound	6,00	6,31	6,75	7,25
Deutsche Mark	4,31	4,37	4,43	4,68
Swiss Franc	3,25	3,25	3,31	3,43
French Franc	3,75	3,68	3,37	3,80
Japanese Yen	1,25	1,25	1,25	1,25
European Currency Unit	6,12	6,25	6,31	6,56

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent

Precious Metals Date: 22/4/1995

Metal	US$/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	US$/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	390,20	7,65	Silver	5,69	5,38

* 24 Kard

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 22/4/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0,685	0,687
Sterling Pound	1,1028	1,1083
Deutsche Mark	0,5005	0,5030
Swiss Franc	0,6059	0,6099
French Franc	0,1405	0,1412
Japanese Yen*	0,8270	0,8311
Dutch Guilder	0,4465	0,4487
Swedish Krona	----	---
Italian Lira*	0,0400	0,0402
Belgian Franc	----	----

* Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 22/4/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1,8000	1,8180
Lebanese Lira*	0,0411	0,0421
Saudi Riyal	0,1824	0,1836
Kuwaiti Dinar	2,3160	2,3610
Qatari Riyal	0,1869	0,1881
Egyptian Pound	0,1900	0,2080
Omani Riyal	1,7700	1,7830
UAE Dirham	0,1859	0,1869
Greek Drachma*	0,2990	0,3300
Cyprus Pound	1,4540	1,5550

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 22/04/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK Plc	520	100330	191.500	193.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	47361	232065	4.800	4.890
BANK OF JORDAN	5100	19633	3.850	3.850
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	7500	11395	1.550	1.480
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	725	2080	2.870	2.870
THE HOUSING BANK	14300	115341	8.160	8.080
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	9260	27951	3.000	3.020
JORDAN GULF BANK	41750	62048	1.450	1.490
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	514	2406	4.720	4.680
BUSINESS BANK	1000	4080	3.890	4.080
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1250	5645	4.360	4.580
BEIT ELMAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	850	3104	3.570	3.660
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	125100	171819	1.340	1.380
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	220	895	4.100	4.100
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	154962	322129	2.050	2.080
BANKS SECTOR	410412	1080921	INDEX NUMBER: 170.36 CHANGE	: +0.78%
JORDAN INSURANCE	9600	31680	3.250	3.300
ARABIAN SEAS INSURANCE	300	570	1.850	1.900
INSURANCE SECTOR	9900	32250	INDEX NUMBER: 137.53 CHANGE	: +0.68%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	16100	27255	1.680	1.690
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER /NEW	61250	97734	1.580	1.600
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	4600	6389	1.320	1.390
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	382	2675	6.950	7.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	6700	22038	3.260	3.280
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	35533	89007	2.420	2.540
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	900	1035	1.160	1.150
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	72350	198250	2.700	2.740
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1600	5382	3.360	3.370
JORDANIAN EXPATRIATES INVESTMENT HOLDING	2250	2880	1.280	1.280
SERVICES SECTOR	201665	452644	INDEX NUMBER: 143.04 CHANGE	: +0.74%
ATTAQNEEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	345	438	1.210	1.270
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	102868	329569	3.100	3.260
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	500	1410	2.840	2.820
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	1160	6958	5.750	6.040
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	970	9164	9.480	9.500
WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	700	1274	1.780	1.820
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	481	1762	3.660	3.700
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	2024	17105	8.250	8.550
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	16993	71716	4.210	4.240
JORDAN DAIRY	200	500	2.500	2.500
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	3500	9724	2.750	2.780
JORDAN PAPER & CARDBOARD FACTORIES	100	400	4.000	4.000
THE PUBLIC MINING	1750	5265	2.930	3.060
SPINNING & WEAVING	4375	11367	2.580	2.590
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	1850	4713	2.550	2.550
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	7164	56955	7.950	7.950
ARAB INVESTMENT & INERNATIONAL TRADE	11250	10238	.920	.910
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	2133	15446	7.200	7.250
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	24150	16675	.700	.690
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	37700	60440	1.600	1.610
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	2550	8033	3.200	3.150
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	27213	86821	3.150	3.160
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	5600	6788	1.200	1.180
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JIMCO	250	165	.690	.660
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	5700	28786	4.950	5.050
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	250	450	1.820	1.800
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3650	8884	2.420	2.460
KAWTHER INVESTMENT	1900	3375	1.800	1.800
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	4900	17903	3.650	3.670
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	3078	6259	2.040	2.030
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	275304	798579	INDEX NUMBER: 126.96 CHANGE	: +1.60%
GRAND TOTAL	897281	2364394	INDEX NUMBER: 150.46 CHANGE	: +1.04%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 179674
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 271746

business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Government considering retiring thousands of civil servants

☆☆ THE GOVERNMENT is considering retiring all government civil servants who have completed 30 years and more in the service. With such a decision, thousands of people will be retired, making room for new graduates to be hired in order to ease unemployment and "provide the administrative system with new blood." Furthermore, a wide reshuffle is being prepared among senior officials at the ministries of foreign affairs and the interior as well as various government institutions (Al Dustour).

☆☆THE ECONOMIC Consultative Council has recommended allowing the establishment of a JD 5 million shareholding company from both the public and private sectors to be invested in free shops at airports and seaports. The free shop in Amman was proposed to serve only diplomats and non-resident foreigners (Al Dustour)

☆☆ THERE ARE more than 4,000 empty apartments in Amman because of the high prices demanded for them. Most of the investors prefer to sell the apartments and not lease them (Al Dustour).

☆☆ THE MINISTRY of Supply intends to buy 200,000 tonnes of Syrian barley at $91 per tonne to meet Jordan's requirement for four months. The ministry is also expected to buy large quantities of split lentils from Syria at $439 per tonne. (Al Dustour).

☆☆ THE UNION Chemical and Vegetable Oil Industries, currently operating the paint factory Rima Lux, recorded total sales of JD 3.17 million last year, about 18 per cent more than the amount posted in 1993. According to its annual report, the company managed to find new markets in Romania and Sudan. The company, netting a profit of JD 351,842 to be retained for 1995, hopes to start trial and actual production of most of its factories before the end of this year. The company was set up in 1993 with a JD 3.5 million capital to establish and / or acquire plants for the production of oil, chemicals, fodder and printing ink (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ THE MUNICIPALITY of Greater Amman is putting for rent some stores at the King Abdullah Gardens near the Wadi Saqra intersection. Stores are between 50 square metres to 171 square metres in area. Key money for each store is JD 22 per square metre, annual rent is JD 44 per square metre and service charge is 15 per cent of the rent amount per year. All stores are airconditioned and have central heating systems (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ A NUMBER of insurance companies are awaiting permission for registration in accordance with the new amendments to the insurance law. The Ministry of Industry and Trade is currently working on regulations to the annexed to the amendments before opening the door for new terms. Two insurance companies have already asked officially for registration while others are still being formed. The amendments specify two main conditions for new insurance companies: To have a capital four times as much as present companies and to introduce new types of insurance to the market. Established companies are not happy to have newcomers to the business and argue that the current 18 companies are more than enough for the country (Al Dustour).

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

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1998 World Cup finals heading for Disneyland

PARIS (AFP) — The 1998 World Cup finals in France are heading for Disneyland unless major problems over the proposed new stadium to be built on the outskirts of Paris are quickly resolved.

An agreement between the government and the consortium set up to build the stadium at St-Denis, just outside Paris, was due to be signed last January but problems over the site continue to dog the project and no agreement has yet been reached.

"It's a shambles," said a source close to the consortium. "We are apidly running out of time and unless an accord is reached very quickly we will be in deep trouble."

Costs of the proposed 80,000-seater stadium have already soared and estimates put the overruns as high as 500 million francs $100 million.

Chemical pollution has been discovered under the land set aside at St. Denis and millions of francs will have to be spent to clean it up so that the stadium can be built.

A recent report on the effect of building the stadium at St. Denis has revealed that on match days the amount of traffic caused by spectators will all but block people from getting to Charles de Gaulle airport further to the north of the capital.

"All in all this is rapidly turning into a nightmare," said another source close to the consortium. "Unless an agreement over the St. Denis site can be signed soon the whole project there is in doubt."

There has also been strong criticism of the world cup committee set up to organise the finals.

If Paris major Jacques Chirac wins this month's French presidential elections he is tipped to name former Olympic gold medalist Guy Drut as Sports Minister.

"If Drut become Sports Minister you can expect the make-up of the local organising committee will be rapidly changed," said one source.

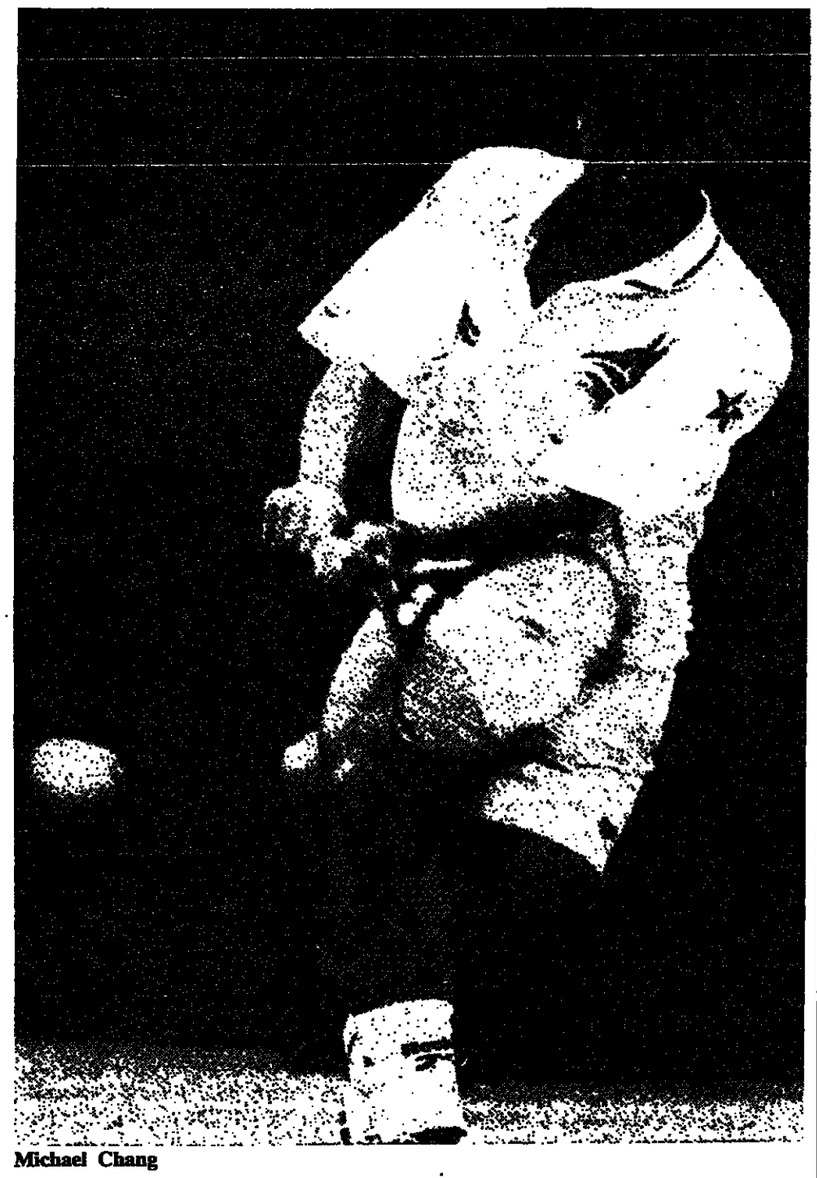
"And the site of the stadium could also change. The solution to the growing problems at the St. Denis site would be Disneyland. There is plenty of land and although it is a lot further from Paris it has very good communication links and is easy to get to," he added.

French officials warn the delays over St. Denis risks forcing them into what they describe as the "Montreal syndrome."

When Montreal won the 1976 Olympics the new stadium being built for the Games was plagued by delays and massive overruns. In the end, the Olympics began with the stadium still to be completed and the city was left with a massive bill.

"We are getting to the stage that we will be at the mercy of the unions. If they demand extra payments we will have to pay because a strike could mean the stadium not being finished in time," said a consortium source.

The plan is to have the stadium finished by November 1997 and being opened in January 1998 but officials insists that unless the agreement between the government and the consortium is completed by the end of April the timetable will be thrown into dissaray.



Michael Chang

Chang beats Courier to reach Hong Kong Open final

HONG KONG (Agencies) — Defending champion Michael Chang cruised into the final of the Hong Kong Open with a 6-4 6-2 win over fellow American Jim Courier on Saturday.

It was quick revenge for top seed Chang after his semifinal defeat by Courier in last week's Japan Open in Tokyo.

He will now play fifth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden, who had a comfortable 6-1 6-4 victory over compatriot and doubles partner Jan Apell.

Chang, whose crisp volleying and solid serving always had Courier at full stretch in the heat and humidity, said: "It was a compete turnaround from last week's match.

"I won good points at the net to break his serve and that was critical," added the world number eight who is chasing his first title of the year. "When I took a 4-2 lead in the second set he did not want to battle me or battle the heat any more.

"It's good to be in the final here again, but I know it will be a tough match against Bjorkman. He is not someone to take lightly."

Courier, who defeated world No. 1 Andre Agassi in the Tokyo final for his third title of the year, said his recent schedule of matches had taken its toll.

"Today I woke up a little bit tired and knew I was in trouble. I did not have any legs out there, I was slow to the ball and I could not dictate the rallies like I did last week," said the third seeded American.

Bjorkman, in his first final of the year, said: "I will be the underdog, but I am going in there to give him a tough match.

Rosset, Medvedev in Semifinals

In Nice, France, fop-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov and his former Soviet doubles partner, Andrei Medvedev, won quarterfinal matches at the Nice Open and advanced to a semifinal showdown.

Russia's Kafelnikov, beat Cedric Pioline of France, 6-3, 1-6, 6-0, and Medvedev, of Ukraine, beat Australian Richard Fromberg, 6-3, 6-2.

The other semifinal will match Switzerland's Marc Rosset, a 7-6 (7-3), 6-2 winner over Australia's Mark Woodforde, against Alberto Costa, who beat fellow Spaniard Tomas Carbonell, 7-6, (9-7), 4-6, 6-4.

Medvedev and Kafelnikov played junior doubles together more than five years ago and won several titles for the former Soviet Union.

"There will be a lot of pressure, especially mentally, for us," Medvedev said. "I have beaten him twice and now he is the higher-ranked player."

Kafelnikov is ranked fourth in the world while Medvedev's ranking has dropped from 4 to 16 in the last year.

Rosset has a habit of doing well in France. Four of his eight tiles have been won on French soil and he enjoyed his biggest payday when he made the Paris Open final in November, losing to Andre Agassi.

Kafelnikov raced through the first five games against Pioline and appeared headed to an easy victory.

Suddenly he started missing, losing three games before finally winning the first set. Pioline jumped to a 5-0 lead in the second set before Kafelnikov took a game, but the Russian breezed through the final set.

Celtics reach NBA playoffs despite 99-92 defeat

Boston Garden witnesses last season game

BOSTON (Agencies) — The Boston Celtics trotted out their legion of hoop heroes Friday night in a lavish ceremony at halftime to mark the celebrated franchise's final regular season game at old Boston Garden.

Owner Red Auerbach and 22 former Celtics were introduced at halftime of the game against the New York Knicks and took places on the famed parquet floor.

After introductions of the former stars brought resounding cheers from the packed crowd. Auerbach inbounded a ball to Nate Archibald, and the ball was passed to each player amidst a thunderous, standing ovation from the Boston crowed.

The string was ended when Bob Cowasy went behind the back to Bill Russell, who fed John Havlicek to the corner, who fed Larry Bird alone under the basket for a layup.

"They lived up to all the standards of what the Celtic family status for" said Auerbach, surrounded by Celtic greats who joined forces to win 16 NBA titles including an incredible run of 11 championships in 13 years from 1956.

"Not only are they great players, they've great people, and I love every one of them."

"Everybody sees something different when they look at that building. I look at it and see a beautiful time of my life," Cousy said.

During the 1946-47 season, Cousy and his Holy Cross teammates played several home games at the garden en route to their NCAA basketball championship. Three years later, Cousy spent his wedding night playing a game for the Celtics.

And in March 1963, when Cousy played his own final regular-season game in the Garden, a moment of quiet was shattered when a fan yelled out, "we love ya, Cooz."

The Garden is following a course followed by Chicago Stadium last year.

The 67-year-old building will be shuttered in September and its prime tenants, the Celtics and the Boston Bruins, will move next door to the Fleetcenter. It is a $160 million, state-of-the-art arena like Chicago's new United Center.

The teams' championship banners will be taken down from the rafters of the yellow brick building. It also has played host to Elvis Preslye and the Beatles, and has been a venue for speeches by John F. Kennedy and Winson Churchill.

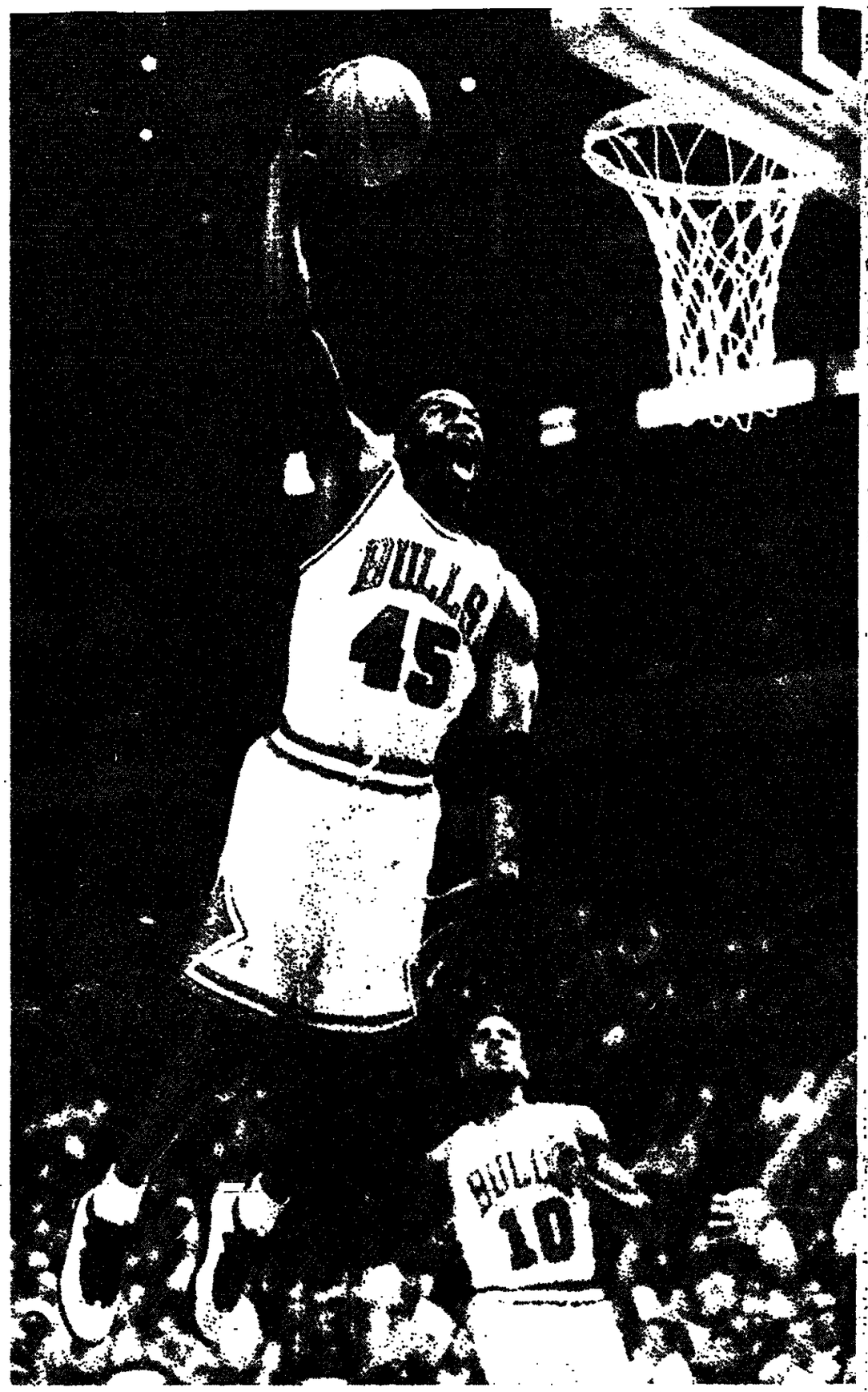
The Fleetcenter will boast an expanded seating capacity, from 14,890 to 18,400 for basketball, and from 14,448 to 17,200 for hockey. But what it will not have are the warts that gave the Garden its charm.

"I always remember just the horror of coming in the place the first time," Maxwell said. "I came in the summer and there were no banners, no parquet and I said, "damn, it must just he a vacant warehouse," Maxwell said.

the garden was opened on Nov. 17, 1928, but it wasn't until 18 years later that the Celtics moved in. On Nov. 16, 1946, the Celtics — then in the Basketball Association of America — beat the Toronto Huskies 53-49 before a crowd of 5,176.

Ten years later, the Celtics won the first of their 16 championships. Cousy and teammates Tom Heinsohn, Bill Russeel and Bill Sharman shocked off the St. Louis Hawks 110-109 in double-overtime.

The Celtics "dynasty" was solidified when they won eight straight championships from 1959 to 1966, two more in 1968-69, two more in 1974 and 1976, and again in 1981, 1984 and 1986. Players like Cousy, Russell, John Havlicek and Larry Bird became Celtics icons, as did longtime coach Arnold "Red" Auerbach.



Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls cuts through traffic to dunk the ball against the Detroit Pistons (AFP)

RESULTS

New York	99	Boston	92
New Jersey	107	Washington	106
Philadelphia	113	Miami	106
Atlanta	128	Detroit	111
Cleveland	103	Milwaukee	82
Orlando	110	Indiana	86
San Antonio	107	L.A. Clippers	96
Utah	99	Minnesota	96
Phoenix	110	Dallas	99
Sacramento	105	Seattle	97

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
y-Orlando	57	24	.704	—
x-New York	54	27	.667	3
x-Boston	35	46	.432	22
Miami	31	50	.383	26
New Jersey	29	52	.358	28
Philadelphia	24	57	.296	33
Washington	20	61	.247	37

Central Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
z-Indiana	51	30	.630	—
x-Charlotte	49	31	.613	1½
x-Chicago	46	34	.575	4½
x-Cleveland	43	38	.531	8
x-Atlanta	42	39	.519	9
Milwaukee	33	48	.407	18
Detroit	28	53	.346	23

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
y-San Antonio	61	20	.753	—
x-Utah	59	22	.728	2
x-Houston	47	34	.580	14
Denver	39	41	.488	21½
Dallas	36	45	.444	25
Minnesota	21	60	.259	40

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
x-Phoenix	58	23	.716	—
x-Seattle	57	24	.704	1
x-L.A. Lakers	48	33	.593	10
x-Portland	42	38	.525	15½
Sacramento	39	42	.481	19
Golden State	26	54	.325	31½
L.A. Clippers	16	65	.198	42

x-Clinched playoff berth
y-Clinched Conference title
z-Clinched division tittle

SPORTS IN BRIEF

8th BFAAME championship opens

AMMAN (J.T.) — The 8th Bridge Federation of Africa, Asia and the Middle East (BFAAME) Championship opened here Saturday with over 200 players from 15 countries taking part. The championship, held under the patronage of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, will run up to May 3. The top two teams will qualify for the world championship in Beijing in September. Participating countries include Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Reunion, Mauritius, Russia, Kenya and Jordan.

Sampras ready for worst surface

MONACO (AFP) — Pete Sampras, although failing nearly two weeks ago in his first 1995 tournament on European clay, remained optimistic about putting things right when the $1.79-million Monte Carlo Open begins on Monday. Sampras, displaced from the number one position on the ATP Tour earlier this month by Andre Agassi, has recovered his poise after losing in the first round at the Barcelona Open. "I've got to get a lot of clay court matches under my belt in order to improve on the surface." Sampras, the current world number two, is the highest ranked player to be entered in the 56-man field at the Monte Carlo event. Agassi will miss the event after pulling out of the Salem Open in Hong Kong with a strained lower back.

Trainer stakes job on beating Israel

WARSAW (R) — Henryk Apostel is staking his job as Poland's soccer coach on victory over Israel in Tuesday's European Championship qualifier in Zabrze. Defeat would end all hopes of reaching the finals in England next year. "We can't let ourselves even contemplate losing a point," Apostel said. "I know what I am going to have to do if we lose or draw the match," added the trainer, who faced calls for his dismissal after Poland's 2-1 defeat by Romania in Bucharest last month. Poland, who lost 2-1 in Israel in September, have only four points from four matches in Group One, compared with their opponents' nine points from five games.

Bad weather hits Japan GP

SUZUKA (R) — Bad weather disrupted Saturday's final qualifying for the Japanese 500cc motorcycle Grand Prix on Sunday and prevented riders from improving on their opening practice times. The heavy rain left Friday's pacesetter, world champion Michael Doohan of Australia, at the head of the field and set for his third successive win of the season. His Honda teammates, Japan's Shinichi Ito and Takoma Aoki, filled second and third spots respectively. Suzuki rider Daryl Beattie of Australia, who is expected to be Doohan's main challenger, remained fifth quickest. "It will be a very, very hard race because (Daryl) Beattie lived in Japan and he knows the Suzuka track very well," Doohan said.

Wilkens to coach U.S. basketball team

ATLANTA (AP) — Lenny Wilkens of the Atlanta Hawks, the winningest coach in NBA history, has been chosen to coach the U.S. men's basketball team at the 1996 Olympics, a newspaper reported Friday. The Atlanta-Journal Constitution said the vote was made by U.S.A. basketball's selection committee during a meeting at a Phoenix-area hotel, and the announcement will be made next week. There has been considerable speculation that Wilkens, who this season surpassed Red Auerbach as the winningest NBA coach, would be chosen for the Atlanta Games.

Berger: Schumacher is 'liar', 'clown'

LONDON (AP) — The feud between two leading Formula One drivers has escalated, with Ferrari Gerhard Berger calling reigning world champion Michael Schumacher a "liar" and a "clown." The war of words heated up earlier this week when Schumacher criticised Berger for celebrating after he was awarded first place — temporarily — in last month's Brazilian Grand Prix. Schumacher finished the race first in his Benetton Williams but was disqualified, along with second-place finisher David Coulthard, for fuel irregularities. Berger, who finished third, was moved up to first. However, on appeal, the world governing body FIA last week reinstated the original placings. "I cannot understand anyone celebrating a victory he achieved when he was lying one lap behind," Schumacher was quoted as saying this week in German newspapers. "If Berger would show as much talent as a driver as he does in public relations, he would win more races."

Pierce to the rescue in Fed Cup

METZ, France (AFP) — World number-three Mary Pierce was far from at her best but was still able to rescue France on the first day of the World Group Fed Cup first-round clash against South Africa here Friday by scoring a straight-sets 6-4, 6-3 win over Joanette Kruger.

The Australian Open champion made a shaky start and needed to save three break points while trailing 2-4 in the opening set. But she survived the crisis and as her powerful groundstrokes began to tell, she was able to win five games in a row.

"Everything went really well in practice and I was very confident when I came out — but when it came to the match I just couldn't get into any rythmn," said Pierce, adding: "I played those first games really badly."

French captain Francoise Durr admitted: "Mary gave me a real fright at the start. She wasn't moving well and she will need to play much better against Coetzer in the reverse singles on Saturday."

Earlier the home side, semi-finalists in the event last year before the new two-day 'Davis Cup style' format was introduced, went behind when Julie Halard crashed 2-6, 4-6 to Coetzer.

Halard, who had beaten the South African number-one in both of their previous encounters, had one of her notorious 'off-days' when nothing went right. Looking sluggish from the start and unable to piece together aggressive-style tennis, the French player quickly convinced herself she was not going to win.

"I have learned Julie's strengths in the past and I was able to neutralise them today," said Coetzer.

"I need to serve better, but I can't wait to play Mary in the second singles. My victory today will give me confidence for that match."

After the reverse singles Halard is expected to be joined by Nathalie Tauziat for the doubles against Coetzer and Elna Reinach.

Mary Pierce

Czech Republic, Belgium win

In the Group One qualifying Group in La Manga, Spain, experience saw the Czech Republic notch up a 3-0 victory over Belarus while Belgium beat Hungary by the same scoreline.

The two teams consequently reached the play-offs for a place in next year's World Group.

The Czechs did not have things all their own way and both Helena Sukova and Jana Novotna dropped sets in the singles.

Sukova eventually saw off promising newcomer Tatiana Ignatieva 6-4, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, while Novotna had to recover after dropping her opening set to love to beat Natasha Zvereva 0-6, 7-5, 6-4.

Australia, Slovak Republic all square

In Perth, Australia, Australia and the Slovak Republic were locked at 1-1 after the first day of their Fed Cup women's tennis tie here Saturday.

Karina Habsudova gave the Slovak Republic a flying start in this World Group One match when she eclipsed Rachel McQuillan in straight sets, 6-1, 6-3 in only 65 minutes.

But the home country's Nicole Bradtke recovered from a dismal opening set to beat Radka Zrubakova in three sets, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

In Sunday's reverse singles clashes, Bradtke meets Habsudova and McQuillan comes up against Zrubakova.

If necessary, the doubles wil decide the tie with Bradtke and Renae Stubbs taking on Habusudova and Zrubakova.

The players' records suggest the Slovak Republic have a slight advantage in the remaining two singles matches.

In their only previous meeting, Bradtke lost to Habsudoba, but that was five years ago.

McQuillan has lost two of three matches against Zrubakova.

But, after beating Zrubakova Saturday, Bradtke was optimistic about her country's chances.

"If we can win one more singles clash, I am quietly confident we have the edge in the doubles," she said.

Habsudova said after beating McQuillan: "It was easier than I thought it might have been. This is one of the better matches I have played on grass."

Draw announced for USA-Austria tie

Austria's top entry, player-captain Judith Weisner, plays Amy Frazier, while 12th-ranked American Mary Joe Fernandez meets little known Barbara Schett in the opening singles of a Fed Cup quarter-final tie.

Sunday's matches open with Weisner, ranked 22, taking on Fernandez, with Frazier following against the 118th-ranked Schett in the reverse singles.

After Sunday's singles, the U.S. doubles team of Gigi Fernandez and Martina Navratilova play the Austrian Duo of Petra Schwarz-Ritter and Weisner.

"The first match is the key match for us if we have a chance in the tie," Wiesner said.

Weisner has a 1-0 edge over Frazier, but has lost to Fernandez five of the six times they have met.

Schett has never played Fernandez or Frazier.

With a record 14 titles, the second-seeded U.S. team enters the competition as the most successful nation in the history of Fed Cup. Austria has never won in the 32-year history of the competition.

Frazier, making her Fed Cup debut, is a last-minute replacement for Californian Lindsay Davenport, who is still suffering with pneumonia and food poisoning.

"It definitely caught me off-guard," Frazier said of her substitute status. "I was surprised, but it's very exciting. Definitely, I think I'll be nervous."

Frazier arrived here in good spirits after winning the Japan Open over eighth-ranked Kimiko Date of Japan last week.

The Austrians are relying on Schett instead of two higher ranked players on their team — 58th-ranked Petra Schwarz-Ritter and 85th-ranked Beatte Reinstadler.

Weisner explained that Schett's recent performance, outdoors on hardcourts at the Lipton Championships, where she defeated 17th-ranked Lori McNeil, was the deciding factor.

"We had to pick someone who could have the weapons to create an upset," Weisner said. "An upset is what we would need, so this is a risk we have to take."

Venables hits back at critics

LONDON (AFP) — England coach Terry Venables, stung by criticism of his get-together this weekend with potential players of the future, hit back on Friday. Venables will use the session to take a closer look at the likes of Stan Collymore, Robbie Fowler, Steve Stone, David James and David Unsworth before naming his squad for the June tournament against Brazil, Sweden and Japan. "It is a valuable session and I'm looking to have more of them next season," Venables said. "If we hadn't had this get-together there still wouldn't have been any games because countries like Ireland, Holland, Germany and Wales are still playing next week.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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USE THOSE GRAY CELLS

Neither vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q 10 9
♡ K J 6
◊ A 9 3
♣ 9 8 6 4

WEST
♠ A 8 7 2
♡ 10 7 4
◊ K 6 5
♣ Q 7 2

EAST
♠ K 4
♡ 9 8 5 3 2
◊ Q 10 8 4
♣ 5 3

SOUTH
♠ J 6 5 3
♡ A Q
◊ J 7 2
♣ A K J 10

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	3-NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Two of ♠

From the day we started playing bridge, it was drummed into us that when defending a no-trump contract we should return partner's suit. That is sound advice on most occasions, but when persisting with partner's suit cannot benefit the defense, be willing to switch the attack to a suit that might produce the desired result.

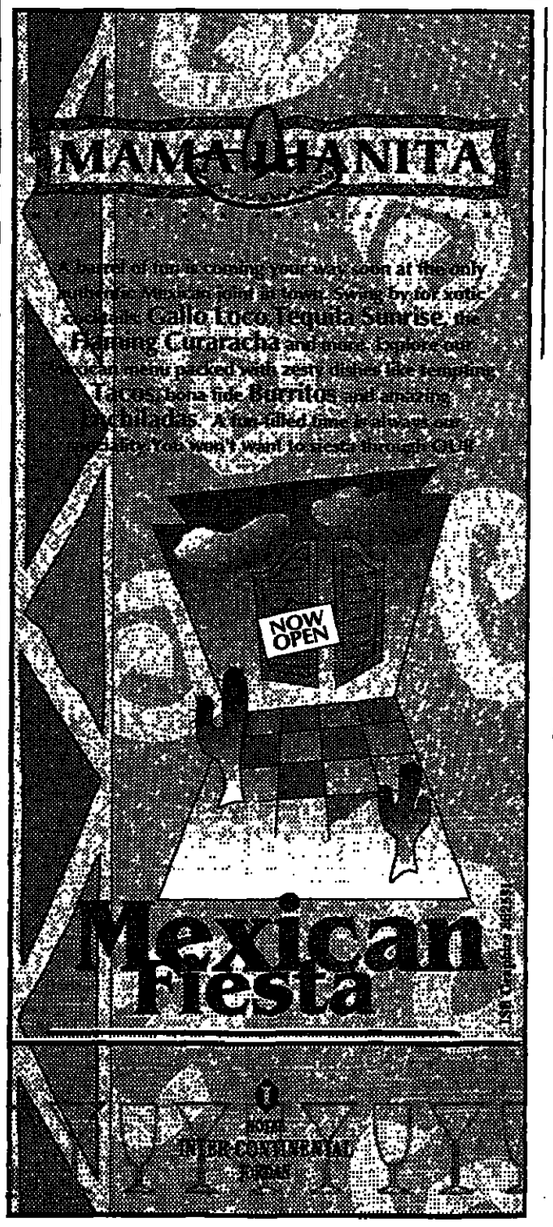
The auction reveals little except that you can find some 18-17 points in the South hand and 10 or so with North. West leads the two of spades to your king. What now?

If you simply returned a spade, you can go on to the next hand. If, instead, you took time to consider the situation, you might have found greener pastures.

Since partner's lead is fourth-best, you know that declarer has four spades, probably to an honor, so that suit offers little future. Dummy's heart holding is impressive, so that leaves only the minor suits as a source of tricks.

If you follow the old adage of leading up to weakness, you won't have done any better. Consider what values partner must have in clubs if you are going to take two or three tricks—at least A Q, or K Q 10.

When looking to develop tricks, you should usually attack the suit in which partner needs the least in high cards to be effective. Here, just the king of diamonds is enough—if you make the right shift. You must return the *ten* of diamonds so that, if declarer covers, dummy's nine will be sandwiched by your Q 8! Now the defenders are a tempo ahead and are sure to take five tricks before declarer can come to nine.



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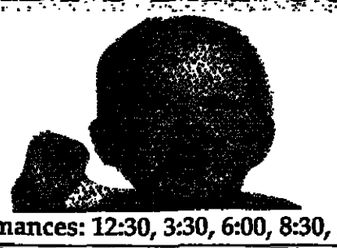

Performances: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN

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TODAY AT

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Tom Hanks in Forrest Gump Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15	Bruce Willis & John Travolta in PULP FICTION Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD "1" Baby's Day Out Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Bad Girls Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:30, 11	Musa Hijazin "Sum'a" in the political satire Hi Citizen written and directed by Mohammad Al Shawaqfa daily on 8:30 p.m. The theatre closes on Monday —Haifa Al Agha in the children's play ☆☆ Sa'di's Return ☆☆	COMING SOON The Comedy Show CABARET	Presents: The political satire: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m. For reservation, please call 625155. The theatre is closed Saturdays & Sundays

هكذا من الأصل

JORDAN-BAHRAIN COOPERATION: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Saturday meets with Sheikh Salman Ben Hamad Ben Issa Al Khalifah, deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the Bahraini Research and Studies Centre.

Prince Hassan and Sheikh Salman discussed means of enhancing cooperation between the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Bahraini centre in economic, cultural and scientific fields.

The meeting, which was held at the Royal Court, was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's cultural secretary. Sheikh Salman arrived in Amman earlier in the day on a several-day visit to the Kingdom (see earlier story on page 3) (Petra photo)

Jordan, PNA to sign trade agreement in early May

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) hope to sign a trade agreement in early May after the PNA sorts out some of the problems it faces in implementing the accord, Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb said Saturday.

"They (the PNA) are having some problems with the Israelis, and they believe that they could sort out these problems soon," Mr. Abul Ragheb said after talks with Ahmad Qouriea, minister of economy in the PNA.

Mr. Abul Ragheb declined to discuss the details of the "problems," but said, "they have settled some of the issues and I think they will be able to settle the rest."

The minister said Jordan had "nothing to do with the problems," and that it was purely an Israeli-Palestinian affair.

Jordan and the PNA have drawn up a trade agreement listing items that will be given preferential treatment by both sides and those subject to taxation, Mr. Abul Ragheb confirmed.

"We hope to sign the (Jordan-PNA) trade agreement in early May, when Mr. Qouriea will be back in Amman," Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported that Mr. Abul Ragheb and Mr. Qouriea discussed "obstacles impeding the implementation of the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement on cooperation" signed in January.

It was a reference to a Jan. 26 accord signed by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and PNA President and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat setting out a broad range of areas of cooperation and calling for separate agreements in various sectors.

Ali Abul Ragheb

Ahmad Qouriea

The trade agreement is part of the accords called for in the Jan. 26 document. Some of the others agreements have already been signed and others are under discussion. Some of them have already been finalised and could be signed in two weeks, Palestinian charge d'affaires in Amman Omar Khatib told the Jordan Times on Friday.

Petra said Mr. Abul Ragheb and Mr. Qouriea "reviewed all aspects of Jordanian-Palestinian economic cooperation, including the means with which the two sides seek to implement the agreement signed in January."

They also discussed "impediments in the exchange of goods" between the two sides.

Jordan and the PNA are also expected to finalise an agreement on transport this week. Some of the provisions in this accord would complement the trade agreement since they establish a firm framework for the transport of goods between the two sides.

Mr. Qouriea, who arrived here from Cairo, where he signed a trade agreement between the PNA and the Egyptian government on Wednesday, was not immediately available for comment.

Sources familiar with the issue said, however, that while Jordan and the PNA had set out a broad scope for cooperation in trade, terms in a similar agreement signed by the PLO and Israel in April 1994 limit Jordanian exports to the Palestinian territories to certain items.

The accord effectively maintains the status of the West Bank and Gaza as a closed market for all except Israel. It lists definite items that the Palestinians can import from non-Israeli sources and also Palestinian goods that could be sent to the Israeli market.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip represents an annual $1.5 billion to $2 billion market for Israeli products.

PNA officials say the PLO agreed to the Israeli-imposed limitations because the accord also gave the Palestinians limited economic and monetary freedoms such as permission to establish a Palestinian monetary authority and issue Palestinian currency.

However, these freedoms — political symbols of Palestinian independence — have not yielded much in real terms for the Palestinian self-rule authority.

COLUMN

Queen confers honour on Thatcher Hillary

LONDON (R) — Queen Elizabeth Saturday appointed former British premier Baroness Thatcher and New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary, first conqueror of Mount Everest, to the Order of the Garter. Appointments to the Order of the Garter, the senior order of chivalry, are entirely in the personal gift of the queen and are not made on the advice of the prime minister of the day. Other former prime ministers appointed to the Garter include Sir Winston Churchill, Earl Attlee, Lord Wilson, Lord Callaghan and Sir Edward Heath, according to Buckingham Palace, which made the announcement Saturday. New Zealanders who have been made Knights Companion of the Order of the Garter include the late marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Elworthy and former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Keith Holyoake.

Yeltsin is in good health for his age

MOSCOW (AP) — With a U.S.-Russian summit three weeks away and fresh rumours about his health sprouting like spring weeds, President Boris Yeltsin's spokesman said his boss was in "good" shape. The Kremlin's latest bulletin on Mr. Yeltsin's health came just days after the 64-year-old leader returned from a three-week mountain and beach holiday in southern Russian. Mr. Yeltsin has looked unwell in public on several occasions this year, and world leaders increasingly are worried about his health and political future at a time when Russia is acting aggressive and inflexible. Sergei Medvedev, Mr. Yeltsin's press spokesperson, said his statement made Friday to Russian news agencies was aimed at dispelling rumours and inventions about the president's well being. "Doctors of the president conclude at present the state of health of Boris Yeltsin is good," the statement said. "It allows him to retain physical activity corresponding to his age." While on vacation, Mr. Yeltsin played tennis, one of his favourite sports. During a February visit to the Kazakh capital of Alma Ata he had to be supported by aides while climbing the stairs to a conference hall.

Cripple abused 2,000 children

VIENNA (AFP) — A 68-year-old handicapped man sexually abused 2,000 children including two toddlers, over a period of 18 years at his hometown of Krems northwest of Vienna, the daily Die Presse reported Saturday. A police spokesman in Krems, 70 kilometres (45 miles) from the capital, confirmed the report and said Johann Fuchs had recently been sent to jail. His victims included a 17-month-old girl and a two-year-old boy. Fuchs, who lived alone and walked with crutches after being crippled in his youth by poliomyelitis, used to hang around Krems Railway Station where he would befriend children and give them money. He would then entice them to his house where he offered them more money for sex, Die Presse said.

Deng's calligraphy appears on biography

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping, who has not appeared in public for a year, recently provided the title calligraphy for a biography of Marshall Ye Jianying, a Communist military hero, major newspapers reported in front page stories Friday. The articles did not say when the 90-year-old Deng provided the calligraphy. Mr. Deng's last public appearance was in February 1994 and reports of his declining health have led to speculation that he is near death. President Jiang Zemin, Mr. Deng's apparent heir, held a seminar to mark the book's publication and used the occasion to warn Communist Party and armed forces leaders against fuelling faction rivalries.

Iraq shows reporters biological facility

AL HAKAM (R) — Iraq took foreign reporters on Saturday on a guided tour of one of its main biological facilities, closely monitored by United Nations arms inspectors.

A 56-metre high tower transmitted pictures from 16 cameras to a U.N. monitoring centre in Baghdad as 200 Iraqi workers produced pesticides and fertilisers.

The United States charged this month that Iraq was trying to develop biological weapons and the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of disarming Iraq under Gulf war ceasefire terms said Baghdad might be hiding germ warfare capability as it had not yet accounted for 17 tonnes of "growth media."

The Al Hakam site's director, British-trained microbiologist Rihab Taha, said the 17 tonnes of material had been "imported by the Ministry of Health and used for medical purposes."

"There is nothing special in this site. Nothing serious," she said.

She said while she understood UNSCOM's suspicions, as all biological equipment could be used for both civilian and military purposes, she saw no reason for "such exaggerations."

The plant at Al Hakam, 80 kilometres south of Baghdad, escaped allied bombing during the 1991 Gulf war that ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

Iraqis now intend to expand the facility to produce enough animal feed to meet the country's needs estimated at two million tonnes a year.

There were new building on the site, some complete and others half-finished. U.N. cameras are installed even in large, recently completed halls where chicken-feed is produced to ensure no illegal activity takes place there.

Under the Gulf war ceasefire, Iraq is to be stripped of weapons of mass destruction and means to produce them. The United Nations has also to ensure that Iraq will not engage in related activity in the future.

Ms. Taha said most of the equipment at Al Hakam was manufactured in Iraq after the Gulf war.

The pesticide factory produced five tonnes a month, she said.

"We need stirrers mixing growth media before we go on to full production and these we needed to import from abroad but cannot because of the embargo," Ms. Taha added.

U.N. inspectors visited the 18-square-kilometre site once a week, Ms. Taha said.

Saturday's tour was the first time Iraq allowed foreign reporters into one of its major biological facilities.

Ms. Taha said Iraq was keen to start production of single-cell proteins and plans were in the pipeline to construct five units at Al Hakam for this purpose.

The structure for one was already complete, she said, and machinery and equipment were under construction.

Arabs, Muslims in U.S. condemn blast and bias

NEW YORK (Agencies) — U.S. Muslims, already seen by some as suspect in the wake of the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing, are calling for restraint amid fears of mounting anti-Islamic sentiment over the Oklahoma City bombing.

As early speculation centred on a Mideast connection to Wednesday's carbombing, Arab-American leaders spoke out against rash judgments and were joined in their appeals by President Bill Clinton.

"This is not a question of anybody's country of origin," Mr. Clinton said Thursday after investigators announced a massive manhunt for "two white males."

"This was murder... Human beings everywhere, all over the world, will condemn this out of their own religious convictions and we should not stereotype anybody," Mr. Clinton said.

As developments in the investigation led authorities away from the Mideast trail, Muslim leaders underscored that prejudice in the media and among law-enforcement officials had fuelled initial suspicions.

"Most of the press took immediately for granted that the perpetrators came from the Middle East," said Hamzi Moghrabi, president of the Arab-American Anti-Defamation Committee.

"This caused panic among the Arabs and the Americans as well, they view their neighbour as responsible," he said, adding that death calls had been reported against Muslims in various U.S. cities.

Mr. Moghrabi, concerned by lingering anti-Arab perceptions from the trade centre bombing that led to the conviction of four militants, said his organisation was among the first to condemn the attack in a move he described as "damage control."

"The Anti-Defamation Committee cautions both law-enforcement officials and the media against premature, and perhaps unfounded, speculation as to the ethnicity of the suspects," the organisation said in a statement.

"We urge the media to the circumspect in the coverage of this extremely sensitive issue," the statement said, adding that there had been "unsubstantiated accusations in the coverage of the issue."

Mr. Moghrabi noted that Muslim leaders throughout the United States have called on their communities to donate blood to the victims of the bombing.

Some six million people of the Islamic faith live in the United States, according to various organisations, with some 5,000 in the area of Oklahoma City alone.

A local television station in Oklahoma City that was relaying live coverage of the bombing aftermath on CNN said in the hours following the tragedy that two suspects of "Middle-Eastern appearance" were involved, a report that was later dismissed as false.

Two Americans of Pakistani origin were questioned for hours by police Thursday in Dallas, Texas and a third from an unspecified Arab country was targetted by authorities in Oklahoma.

The three men, who were from New York City, were released Friday but their photos and identities had been the source of speculation in local television and press reports here.

The fact that the men were found to have no connection with the bombing after questioning appeared to be buried amid lengthy reports on their activities over the past days.

The Council of Presidents of National Arab-American Organisations "unequivocally" condemned the bombing, expressing their "horror and disgust at the wanton destruction of innocent human life caused by this heinous act..."

Council Chairman Khalil E. Jahshan denounced the "tendency of the media and so-called experts on terrorism" to speculate that the perpetrators were "Middle Eastern" in origin, saying the American public has not been served by such rumours and speculation. He praised President Clinton and federal law enforcement officers for their refusal to "participate in or encourage irresponsible and defamatory speculation."

Members of the council are extremely concerend at the tendency of the media and so-called experts on terrorism to speculate at the identity of the perpetrators of the Oklahoma City bombing. Whoever the guilty parties turn out to be, the American public has not been served by the rumours and speculation that the perpetrators were "Middle Eastern" in origin. Jahshan emphasised that "such aspersions constantly reinforce stereotypes of Arab Americans and Americans Muslims and, by implying collective guilt, have already caused a backlash against the Arab and Muslim communities throughout the country."

U.S.-sought suspect was not on controversial flight — report

BEIRUT (Agencies) — A local newspaper said Saturday it had a reporter aboard a flight denied landing permission in Saudi Arabia on April 7, but that he did not see Imad Mughniyeh among the passengers as suggested by a U.S. daily.

The Middle East Airlines (MEA) Boeing 707 was on a flight from Khartoum, Sudan, to Beirut via Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities told the airline, Lebanon's flag carrier, that the plane was barred from landing because of a bureaucratic mix-up in paperwork involving the flight number.

But Beirut aviation sources said the Saudi decision may have been prompted by the presence of Sheikh Saeed Shaaban, a Lebanese Sunni Muslim fundamentalist cleric, among the passengers.

On Friday, U.S. officials said the Saudi action foiled an attempt to arrest a suspect wanted in two attacks, including the Oct. 23, 1983, car bombing that killed 241 U.S. servicemen in Beirut.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher has expressed concern to Saudi Arabia, a close commercial ally, about failure to cooperate with the Americans in making the arrest (see page 2).

Sheikh Shaaban has never been linked to attacks against Americans or Westerners during the 1975-90 civil war, and the U.S. charges raised speculation that someone else may have been on the MEA flight.

The Los Angeles Times quoted a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) official as saying Mughniyeh was aboard and described him as "the single most dangerous terrorist at large today."

The Saudis have not commented on the U.S. allegations.

Beirut's leftist daily Al Safir said Saturday its reporter "could have recognised a person like Mughniyeh from his features, movements and security around him even if he had used a false name or was under a veil among a group of Sudanese women who were on the plane."

The reporter "could verify that he (Mughniyeh) was not on this plane," it said.

The newspaper said a delegation of the Iran-backed Lebanese Hizbollah, led by the group's deputy leader, Naim Qassem, had flown from Khartoum to Beirut via Damascus, Syria three days earlier.

Leaders of Shiite and Sunni religious groups and a number of clergymen from across the Islamic World gathered in Khartoum for a conference in early April. Al Safir said there was never a mention of Mughniyeh attending the conference.

Al Safir said "if the American information on Mughniyeh's presence in Khartoum was correct, then the witness is absolutely certain that he (Mughniyeh) was not on board the flight."

The Lebanese journalist, Fuad Hteit, who covered the conference in Khartoum said Mughniyeh's name "was not mentioned even once" at the meetings, strengthening the belief he did not attend.

Mughniyeh was Hizbollah's security chief at the peak of kindappings and bombings that targeted Americans and other Westerners in Lebanon in the 1980s.

In addition to his suspected involvement in the suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine base, Mughniyeh is believed to have taken charge of U.S. hostages held in the 17-day hijacking of TWA Flight 847 at Beirut airport in June 1985.

Mughniyeh rarely appears in public. Since the end of the 1975-90 civil war, he spends most of his time in Tehran.

He could not be identified among mourners during a Hizbollah-led funeral of his younger brother, Fuad, Dec. 21, in Beirut.

Fuad Mughniyeh and three other people were killed and 16 wounded in a carbombing in a Shiite suburb of Beirut a day earlier.

Libya tells U.N. no permission needed for Haj flights

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Libya has told the chairman of a Security Council sanctions committee on Friday that the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj) was a religious matter which did not require anyone's permission.

"We should obey our God without permission from anybody ... it is not an international matter, it is a matter of religion," Libyan U.N. envoy Mohammad Azwai said.

"Any interference with this matter of religion would not be agreeable to any Muslims."

Mr. Azwai said he gave this response to Sanctions Committee Chairman Karel Kovanda of the Czech Republic when he asked about reports that a Libyan airliner flew pilgrims to Jeddah earlier this week in defiance of U.N. sanctions.

The sanctions, which include a ban on flights to and from Libya, were imposed in 1992 because of its failure to surrender for trial two men indicated in the United States and Britain for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.

The Sanctions Committee on Wednesday gave permission for Egyptair to conduct 45 return flights from Tripoli and Benghazi to Jeddah for Libyans making the Haj. But before those flights got under way, a Libyan airliner, in defiance of the U.N. ban, flew about 150 pilgrims to Jeddah.

Mr. Azwai told questioners he did not know whether any further flights by Libyan planes would take place.

Mr. Kovanda told reporters later he got the impression from the Libyan ambassador that, in view of the Egyptian shuttle, "there is no need for other (Libyan) flights."

Asked if Libya ran the risk of additional sanctions if it organised further flights using its own airliners, Mr. Kovanda said: "Even with the one flight with which they did fly in the face of the Security Council, they are at risk of further measures being taken, needless to say."

See related stories on page 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

6 dead, 14 injured in floods in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Six people died and 14 others were injured in floods in the Mashhad region of northeast Iran, state radio reported Saturday. Another three people are missing after the floods Friday, which were caused by torrential rain over northern Iran. The victims were all picnicking near Mashhad in the north of Khorasan province when the floods started, Tehran radio said.

Earthquake jolts southern Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — A strong earthquake rocked two Gulf-side provinces in southern Iran early Saturday, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in the 4:55 a.m. (0025 GMT) quake, said the agency. It said the tremor had a preliminary magnitude of 5.4. It shook the southern and southwestern provinces of Bushehr and Khuzestan. The geophysics institute of Tehran University located the epicentre of the quake near Behbahan, 650 kilometres south of Tehran. In January, an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.1 jolted the southern town of Fin, injuring 11 people and severely damaging some buildings. Iran is exceedingly quake-prone. Hundreds of moderate tremors are reported each year.

Israeli Labour Party leader in China

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Huang Ju, a member of the Political bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), met with Israeli Labour Party leader Nissim Zvili here Friday, Xinhua said. The Israelis arrived in China on April 18 at the CPC's invitation. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on relations between the CPC and the Israeli Labour Party, and issues of mutual concern, the official news agency said. During their stay here, the Israeli group toured the Baoshan Steel Works Group and the Pudong News Area, and went sightseeing on the Huangpu River.

Egyptian says cat told him to kill

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian bedouin who murdered three of his children said he was acting under orders from a black cat which appeared to him in a dream, the daily Al-Wafd reported Saturday. Gomma Salama, 47, a nomadic shepherd from the northern Sinai, strangled his 13-years-old son Selim and his seven-year-old daughter Salima with the girl's shawl after chasing them across the desert. He then killed another son Salem, eight, with the spear the boy used for hunting birds. Salama's two other sons escaped death, one by hiding in the desert and the other by staying in the house with his mother. Salama hid the bodies before giving himself up to police. He told officers he had been visited in his dreams by a black cat which tried to strangle him and ordered him to murder his children. His wife Aziza Abdel Al, 30, said he had suffered hallucinations and fits of bad temper for years during which he physically abused his children.

35 years of married silence in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — A Turkish couple in their 80s have been feuding with each other for 35 years. Yet they still share the same house they have lived in since their forced marriage 64 years ago, the Turkish Anatolia News Agency reported on Saturday. The couple's marriage was arranged by their families, in the northern province of Samsun. But the trouble started in 1960 when the wife Hediye, now 82, decided she had "had enough." She refused to speak another word to husband Mecit, 85, in the home where they had raised seven children. The couple decided not to divorce, because of the traditions in their little village of Bafra. (Divorce is not approved of in the traditional communities in Turkey). So they lived in the same house but in different rooms, even taking their meals separately. All efforts at reconciliation, by their children and 17 grandchildren, by everyone from the mayor to the mufti were in vain.

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